MARVEL'S SEARCH FOR NEW TALENT [DETAILS INSIDE]

NUMBER 25

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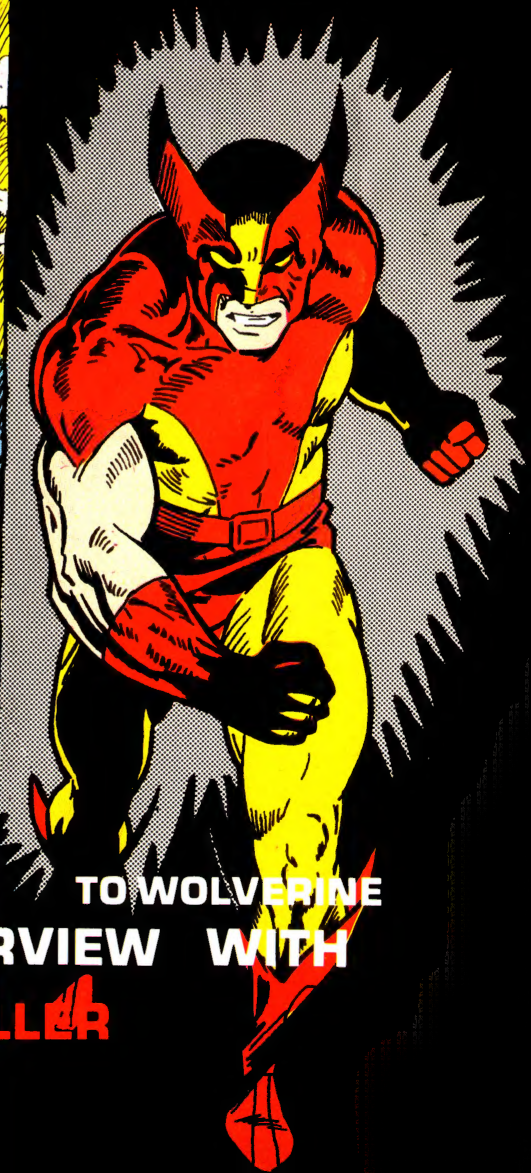

NEW PROJECTS FROM MARVEL

THE JOE STATON INTERVIEW

FROM DAREDEVIL TO RONIN TO WOLVERINE

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

FRANK MILLER

COMICS FEATURE

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COMICS FEATURE #27
Editor: Robert E. Lewis

THE HOTTEST TALENT IN COMICS SPEAKS OUT: **AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN BYRNE**
The stellar light of comic book fandom talks about his career, his view of comic books and comic book creators, the relationship of a comic book creator with his fans and his publisher, the future of comics and much more. Profusely illustrated, this talk with perhaps the most popular comic book personality today should make for a very strong selling issue. Be prepared for the additional sales and order enough copies to keep on hand to meet the demand. [Note: This is not a brief interview to promote a new book or panel discussion but a complete and exclusive in-depth talk with this comic book giant.]

THE ART OF JOHN BYRNE No interview with Byrne would be complete without a look at the work of the man both as an artist and as a writer.

NMP

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ISSUE NUMBER 25

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COVER
RONIN:Art by F.Miller from Ronin #1 published by DC Comics ©1983 Frank Miller WOLVERINE: Copied from Wolverine #1(with apologies to Miller) Character ©1983 Marvel. DAREDEVIL:Art by r. R.Lewis. Character ©1983 Marvel Comics.

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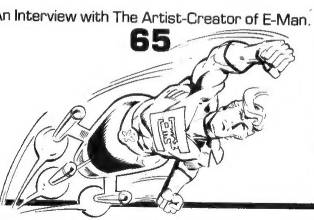

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Comics Feature is published monthly by New Media Publishing,Inc. 1518 E. Fowler Ave. Tampa, R 33612. Distributed in England by Titan Distributers Ltd. P.O. Box 250 London E3 4RT. ©1983 New Media Publishing, Inc. Cover characters ©1983 Marvel Comics.

Opening Notes

Opinion by Robert Lewis

He Doesn't Speak For Me

Gary Groth may have given the impression that he was acting as spokesman for the comics fan press in his editorial, which appeared in Comics Journal #79. This is a false impression. I did not choose Mr. Groth as my spokesman, and I do not know of anyone, not associated with Fantagraphics, who did. I did not ask for, nor will I accept Groth as my representative. And there are reasons for this.

I believe that to utilize the press as a vehicle to launch one's personal attacks against other people is an act so petty and disgusting that it debases even the paper that it is printed on. This may sound harsh, and it is, but I resent seeing journalism being distorted and perverted for fun and profit.

I do not expect to agree with everything that I read in the press- be it the PRESS, or the fan press. But in all cases I expect to find an article supported by facts. An editorial may not be part of the news section, qualifying instead as an opinion piece, but that does not relieve it of certain responsibilities. The average person reads an editorial and assumes - that the work falls within the standards of journalism. But this is not always the case.

Groth's editorial attempted to deal with the deteriorating relationship between Marvel Comics and the fan press. But his methods seemed more geared towards inflaming then stabilizing. His approach to the problems confronting Marvel and the fan press was an assessment of such narrow scope that its conclusions were apparently decided before the writing or the research. Despite the title of his editorial, "Marvel's War With the Press", Mr. Groth did not take up the banner in defense of the press. Instead of being constructive and attempting to promote a desire to improve the working relationship between Marvel and the press, Groth did the opposite. Under the guise of a news editorial he amassed a barrage of cheep-shots and insults whose only result could be the continuence and deepening of hostilities.

It is depressing to see a person who has done so much, for reasons I am unable to fathom, to promote ill feelings between the comic industry and the press, now decrying the results while seeing all faults but his own. Reading through Groth's editorial was a tour de farce of an attitude which claims special dispensation for its side while denying all but meager considerations to the other side. This attitude has manifested itself before, through his attacks on fellow journalists, comic creators, convention promoters, fans and the public in general. These attacks are usually preceded by someone's failure to agree with him. At such times – as in his editorial– Groth will stoop to insults and casting asperations on both a person's character and mental capabilities in the mistaken assumption that this helps substantiate his position. If, by chance, he is called on this questionable tactic, he indignantly demands facts to support such an affront. Perhaps he should objectively read his own magazine.

If anything was accomplished by Groth's editorial it was the muddling of some very important points with needless antagonisms which created more problems than it could have hoped to resolve – if resolving anything was its intention.

There are certain realities of the market that Groth may refuse to accept, but Marvel has to deal with. A company must respond to the wants of its buying public if it wishes to remain in business. As time passes and tastes change, the company must re-identify its responsive market and target its product to it. Groth may not agree with the axiom "the customer is always right", but unless he is willing and able to subsidize the comic industry, it is a moot point. There are standards of quality that should be, but are not always met; this is a fact of life. However, an intemperate, abrassive attitude by a critic will do little to validate any suggestions for improvements.

What this abrassive attitude provokes is anger and a desire to retaliate. When this situation reaches the bursting point, reason departs and the results are often counter-productive. Case in point: the reverse Spider-Man issue hoax. This was a jest in bad taste and poor judgement. It hurt Marvel's credibility and complicated news gathering at a time when it could do the most harm to both sides. It is not difficult to understand the anger and frustrations felt at Marvel over questionable reporting. It was not unlike the same feelings of the press for the hoax - the feeling that someone did not have enough respect for you or your work to deal with you honestly. However, the method used to create this feeling of empathy is not justifiable. There is no excuse for a news hoax. By the same token, Kim

continued on inside back cover

FEATURE NEWS

MARVEL GIVES RELEASE DATES FOR PROJECTS AND MINI-SERIES IN 1983

Marvel Comics has announced several additional new projects to be released as one-shot projects later this year. Lea Sapp, Marvel Comics press liason, has also released the firm dates for many of the upcoming mini-series scheduled for this year.

Funny Letters is a new book to be released the first of November. The book was originally scheduled to be edited by Tom DeFalco. DeFalco has since left the book but has not yet been officially replaced. Peter David, Marvel's Assistant Manager of Direct Sales, believes that the new editor on the project will more-than-likely be Danny Fingeroth. The book will contain the funniest letters to appear in the letter columns of various Marvel comic books over the years as well as letters by individuals who went on to be comic book professionals in subsequent years. David said that "Many of these people would probably prefer that thier letters not be printed...that they be forgotton." The book will be illustrated, on sale only in the direct market, and retail for 60 cents for a 32 page package.

Generic Comic Book started as a joke by Peter David. He teasingly suggested that their next project should be a generic comic book featuring "a superhero, an escape from Ryker's Island, two crumbling buildings and six hundred rubber-necking bystanders." To his surprise, Shooter turned to the others and asked who would like to edit the project. Larry Hama immediately volunteered and was assigned to the book. The book, of course, follows in the tradition of various paperbacks released in specific genres such as A Western, A Romance, A Mystery and the like.

The hero of the book will be given stock powers and thrust into stock situations. The whole thing will be played **very** tongue-in-cheek. The book will ship December 13th for direct-market distribution only and will retail at 60 cents for a 32-page package.

The 3-D Doctor Strange is still another odd project derived from the recent revival of interest in this so-called three-dimensional process. Jack Kirby has produced a 3-D comic book and several films have been released both theatrically and to television. Now Marvel has jumped onto the bandwagon but with a reasonably strong package. Mike Golden will do the art and regular writer Roger Stern will write the story. This too is being edited by Larry Hama. The book will be on Baxter paper, released through the direct market only and retail for $2.00. Also included will be a set of glasses so that the images can be properly perceived.

The story will fall within the normal comic book continuity although it will be designed to stand on its own and not follow from a particular issue and into a particular issue of the regular comic book. December sixth is the projected shipping date.

"The Office Handbook of the Marvel Universe" is a new series scheduled to begin appearing in **Marvel Age**. The series will provide the specifications for various members of the Marvel staff beginning with Jim Shooter and Tom DeFalco. Each staff member's origin, powers and abilities will be delineated. Their secret aliases will also be given. For example it has been suggested that DeFalco is also known as both the Mirror Master and the Reverse Flash, both oblique references to the recent turbulance involving DeFalco and the fan press in a disagreement over whether Marvel Comics should play practical jokes with the news, and indeed whether Marvel Comics had done so by announcing/not announcing the plan for an issue of **Spiderman** to be published in reverse with a special mirror. Certainly each member of the staff will be seen in a new light at the conclusion of this series.

Release dates have been given for a number of upcoming projects as well. The **X-Men/Micronauts** mini-series will ship September 13th, **Black Panther** on October 4th, **Beauty and the Beast** [the teaming of the Dazzler with the Beast] on November 15th, **Wonderman** on December sixth, **Mantis** on September 27th and **Marvel Tails** on July 19th.

Carl Potts is working on a new book which will feature a group of French

Foreign Legion-type adventurers in outer space. Frank Cirocco will be the penciller and the writer has not yet been chosen. The book should see release in December.

A few other notes of interest have also been announced. It seems that issues of all of the direct only books will not be direct only but will be printed in 48-page, $1.00 packages to be distributed both on the newsstands and in the Direct Market. The books will carry advertising suggesting that future issue are available through comic book stores or by subscription. The issues will be: **Moon Knight #35, Micronauts #57** and **Ka-Zar #29**. The first two will be distributed in September while the latter will see August release.

Marvel Productions has produced 30 second spots tied in to the **G.I. Joe** comic book. The first set will run for seven weeks beginning April 18th and will feature the Joes fighting their way across a snowy waste to fight Destro, the Master Tactician of Cobra (issue #14), while the second set which begins on June 18th and runs six weeks, will tie into the sixteenth issue of the book in which the Joes fight a losing battle at the U.S. Treasury.

Mighty Marvel Team-Ups, will now be known as **Mighty Marvel Team-Up Thrillers**, will ship May 25th, and will feature the following lineup: Spiderman and Red Sonja by Chris Claremont and John Byrne, X-Men and the Avengers by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the Hulk and the Thing by Len Wein and Jim Starlin and the Silver Surfer and Thor by Stan Lee and John Buscema. The stories are reprint.

Marvel Tails will feature the work of DeFalco, Armstrong and Albello and will present the adventure of Hulkbunny (in an origin story), Goose Rider, Peter Porker, the Spectacular Spiderham, and Captian Americat. This is the book which previously went under the working title of "Funny Animals".

NEW PROJECTS, CANCELLED TITLES AND SOME SERIOUS PROBLEMS AT DC COMICS

DC Comics has launched some very peculiar new projects and some very imitative new titles. The odd projects include a postcard drawn by Keith Pollard and featuring The Vigilante, the star of DC's newest book, and **DC Sampler**, a 32-page comic book with double-page spreads featuring most of the major DC characters. Both of these items would have been issued as give-aways in prior years although they are now offered for sale. It is not yet known how seriously dealers and collectors will take these items.

Also new from DC, their copy-cat entries into reprint, Baxter-paper projects and graphic novels. The first reprint series will feature the Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams stories from **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** while the first graphic novel will be by Elliott Magin and Jose Garcia Lopez. The reprint series will be seperate from the DC licensed, Seagate published **Masterpieces of Comic Book Art**.

Of a more serious nature is the new **Vigilante** title being spun off from **The New Teen Titans** and produced by Marv Wolfman and Keith Pollard; **Nathaniel Dusk** by Don McGregor and Gene Colan; **Infinity, Inc.**, the young JSA title; **Super Jrs.**, the new book by Ernie Colon; and the previously announced **Zero Man**, by Len Wein and Gil Kane, featuring a man from the future who comes to the present to destroy his past.

To make room for these books DC has cancelled **House of Mystery, Adventure Comics, Captain Carrot** and **Night Force**.

The serious problem which DC has been facing is the extreme loss of credibility due to not meeting their production schedules on a very consistent basis. While this type of behavior is expected from the novice publishers – although First Comics has kept a very rigid schedule – or from special projects, it is not expected with the consistent regularity that DC has experienced it with titles such as **Detective Comics, Captain Carrot, Superboy,** and the **Justice League of America**. In fact, one recent week of DC shipping involved only three delayed titles and nothing else. Public Relations Director Mike Rynn has frequently coupled his announcements of delays with a request not to treat the delays as a new item.

Marvel Looks For New Talent

Marvel Comics has increased activity to facilitate development of new creative talent. The program will involve the expansion of the Marvel house organ, **Marvel Age**, and special convention appearances, especially at San Diego Comicon.

Starting with issue #7, **Marvel Age** will be going to 32 pages. In the tradition of "How To Draw Comics The Marvel Way", **Marvel Age** will begin running a series of articles and features aimed at the aspiring artist and writer who would like to break into the comic business.

In addition to "How to" articles there will be features on how to submit samples, how a comic book is made, and articles by professionals in the field who will be critiquing their early work in a learn-by-example-style format.

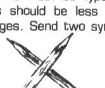
The additional pages will also run occasional try-out jobs of people who are trying to break into comics on a professional basis. Jim Shooter has submissions in his office from people who read his Shooter's Page in **Marvel Fanfare**. They need an Editor to work with them, a story to work on, and a place for the story to see print.

For many, being published in **Marvel Age** will be the first step on the road to becoming a professional. These people will be doing Marvel stories, with Marvel characters, assisted by Marvel Editors in a try-out forum.

For anyone interested in submitting work, the format and requirements are as follows:

Send Xeroxes, do not send original art. Each submission should include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with proper postage. Otherwise Marvel cannot return them and they will be thrown away.

WRITERS — Submit brief plot synopses only. Do not sent scripts, short stories, or long, long outlines. Submissions must be typed. A plot synopses should be less than two typed pages. Send two synopses at most.



PENCILERS — Submit 2-4 pages of panel-to-panel continuity. Do not send pin-ups, abstract art, landscapes, etc. Draw with pencil on kid-finish Bristol paper. Your pages should be one half times larger than the pages in the printed comics. Draw any character you want, but show a variety of settings and situations. Prove that you can draw ordinary people, super heroes, action and quiet scenes.

INKERS — This is a tough one. First, you've got to get a pencil drawing to ink, yours or someone else's. It's perfectly all right to trace the drawing. Again the drawing should be on kid-finish Bristol paper, and preferably it should be panel-to-panel continuity. Before inking the pencil art (with India ink) photocopy it. Submit both the inked pencil drawing and the photocopy of the original pencil art. Two to four pages is fine.

LETTERERS — Submit samples of lettering approximately one-and-one-half times larger than the lettering printed in the comics. Include samples of sound-effects, titles, and display lettering. Letter your sample in Indie ink on kid-finish Bristol paper.

COLORISTS — There really is no easy way to submit coloring samples because the coloring process is very complicated and very specialized. If you really want to try, though, buy a copy of a Marvel pocket book, that has black-and-white printing. These are on sale at most stores that carry paperbacks. Photocopy half a dozen or so pages on bond paper. Color these bond paper copies with colored inks, dyes, watercolors or whatever. Marvel uses Dr. Martin's watercolor dyes which may not be available where you are, but that's not important. If your samples are really outstanding and Marvel wants to try you out on some regular pages using professional materials they'll loan you a coloring kit. Remember, however, that their regular printing process is very restrictive. A lot of modeling and color blending will only prove that you don't know the limits of the processes. In general, the simpler your coloring samples are, the better they are.

NEWS

Marvel editors will attend various conventions in order to examine portfolios. Their biggest push will be at the San Diego Comicon.

Marvel is in the process of finalizing plans for this year's San Diego Comicon. Jim Shooter and the Editors want to make participation in this year's convention the biggest ever. In order to do this, Marvel has decided to send Jim Shooter and all of the Editors to San Diego for the con. Jim Shooter, Louise Jones, Larry Hama, Denny O'Neil, Mark Gruenwald, Al Milgrom, Tom DeFalco, Carl Potts, Archie Goodwin, Ralph Macchio, Bob Budiansky and Jo Duffy will all be attending.

In addition to this being a good opportunity for readers to meet their favorite Editors and ask them questions about working in comics, what's new and exciting in their books, and what new projects are planned for 1983, Marvel will be working closely with the folks at San Diego and participating in as many of their panels and Seminar Workshops as possible. The Editors and Creators will also be reviewing portfolios of aspiring young artists and writers.

A pre-convention publicity on portfolio review, letting people know in advance not only that Marvel Editors will be there and will be reviewing and critiquing submissions, but also what format these submissions should take, what Marvel will be looking for in a portfolio, and times and places where aspiring artists and writers can meet with and get feedback from their favorite editor.

Information will also be run in Bullpen Bulletins, Bullpen Specials, **Marvel Age**, and **Comics Feature**. In addition to this, Marvel will be publishing a list of conventions which their Editors and creative people will be attending.

GIFFEN OFF OMEGA MEN?

According to our sources, Keith Giffen will be leaving the **Omega Men** book in the near future. He will be taking on several new assignments primarily related to writing rather than drawing. He will be doing the Creeper series in the back of the **Flash** title as well as writing the **Green Lantern**, according to this normally reliable source.

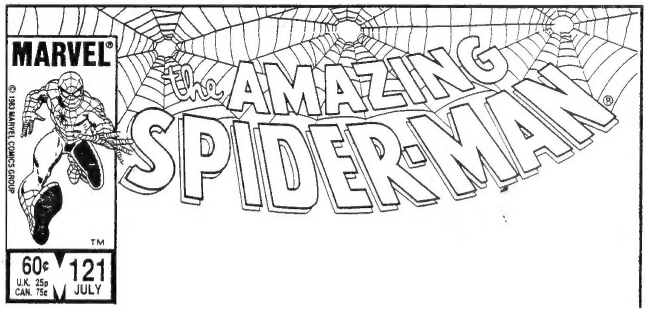
Mike Flynn, the PR man for DC, said that "as of today Keith is still on the book and has taken no new assignments. That is as of today and I can not tell you what will happen tomorrow. He may drop everything. He may have all new titles. He is definitely interested in writing.

If this is true it certainly doesn't bode will for DC Comics venture into producing Baxter-format projects for the direct market. **Camelot 3000** is now one month behind schedule and will be issued every six weeks rather than every four as originally planned. And now the **Omega Men** title may have lost its very popular penciller. This coupled with the rise in price of 25% may jeapordize the hopes that DC has placed in this type of project.

A late addition to the DC Baxter book situation has arisen just as this section goes to press. It seems that two issues of the **Omega Men**, numbers three and four, have been released within one week of each other. This of course plays havoc with the shelf life of the third issue and has caused a very great uproar from dealers who have purchased their copies on a non-returnable basis, who say that they are dealing with what is a poor-selling title to begin with, and who now find themselves with an investment in a book without a shelf life.

MARVEL'S NEW MASTHEAD

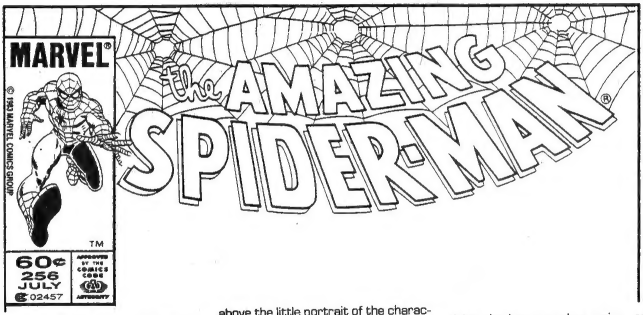
A subtle change is coming to every Marvel comic in 1983. Starting with books dated October, the covers will carry a new masthead. The masthead is that device by which a publisher declares itself on the covers of all its magazines, the display of the issue number, date, major character and the title code number which mean something only to shippers and wholesalers. Beginning with the October releases, the stripe across the top of the cover that blares "Marvel Comics Group" will be gone, retired in favor of a rectangle which will sit in the upper left hand corner with the likeness of the title's major hero(es). The result is a corner insignia, reminiscent of the original Marvel trademark which Stan Lee pioneered.



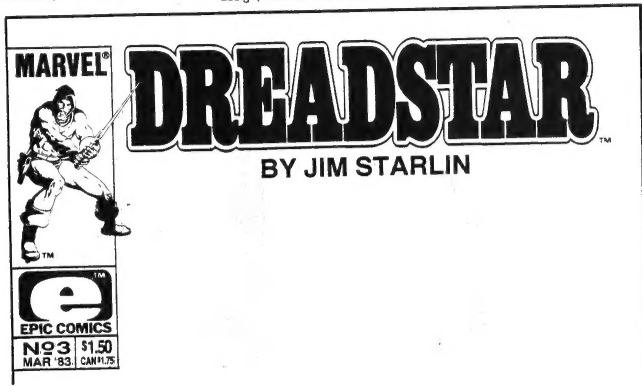
The trademark will be smaller. Eliminating the banner allows the logo (which is the name of the magazine) to be set closer to the top of the page, providing for an inch more of cover art. Devoting more room to art should facilitate the editorial effort to provide as wide a variety as possible.

The line of **Epic** comics will carry its version of the new Marvel masthead, while maintaining its own identity symbolically represented by the graphic letter "e". This will eliminate any confusion as to which company is publishing the books.

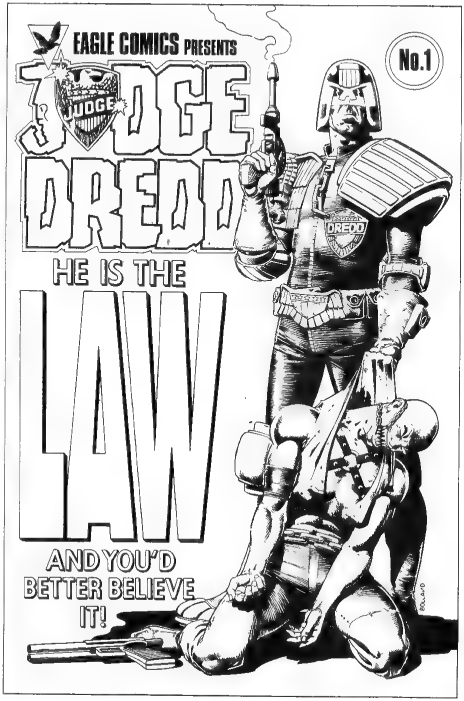
A composite sketch of what the new masthead would look like resembled



the classic Marvel masthead of the 1960s. The most prominent change is the placement of the single word "Marvel" in lieu of "Marvel Comics Group," by now an unnecessary redundancy. "Marvel" sits right above the little portrait of the character. Underneath the character's likeness are arranged the issue number, date, circulation code, price, and seal of the Comics Code. The direct-sales titles bear a variation of this design, with a silhouette "M" containing the issue number, price, and date. No Comics Code Seal will appear on the direct market copies. Marvel apparently only feels that the seal is needed to placate whole-salers and chain retailers.



New British Comic Company



EAGLE

A new, British-owned, comic book company has been launched. Eagle Comics will be aimed at presenting British talent to the American direct sale market.

Writers include John Wagner, Pat Mills, and Alan Moore while Brian Bolland, Mike McMahon, Dave Gib-Gibbons, Kevin O'Neill, Ron Smith, Ian Gibson, Carlos Ezquerra, Gary Leach, Steve Dillon and Alan Davis provide the art. The list is something of a Who's Who of **2000 AD**.

The first release, **Judge Dredd**, is a character from **2000 AD** who was introduced to the American market through a series of anthologies published by Titan Books.

Judge Dredd #1 will feature a 16-page lead story, "The Coming of Judge Death" with "Punks Rule", "The Forever Crimes" and "The Judge Dredd Story" filling out the issue. All stories are written by John Wagner and pencilled and inked by Brian Bolland. The book is edited by Nick Landau.

The format of the book is the same as an American comic book and not that of the typical British weekly, which lacks a slick cover and features numerous, very short stories.

MARVEL NEWS TIDBITS

Fred Hembeck Destroys the Marvel Universe is a new, one-shot satiric title planned for summer release. The title is self-explanatory and certainly indicates that Jim Shooter can take a joke – even if it is on him.

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The Djinn will appear in **Coyote #3**. The character previously appeared in **NMP's Fantasy Illustrated**.

The Silver Surfer will fight Terrax in **FF #259**.

The Hobgoblin will die in **Spiderman #245**.

Deathlock will make an appearance in **Captain America #286**.

Marvel Team-Up Annual #6 co-stars Spiderman with the New Mutants and Cloak and Dagger.

The Avengers will receive a new logo with issue #236, the issue in which Spiderman tries out for the team.

Marvel Team-Up #134 teams Spiderman with Jack of Hearts.

"What If Submariner Had Not Lost His Memory?" is the story appearing in **What If #41**.

Marvel Graphic Novel #7 will feature Killraven in a new story by Don McGregor and Craig Russell. This material, in reduced form, was originally scheduled for publication in **Epic**.

Marvel Graphic Novel #8 will be "Dazzler: The Movie" and will co-star Storm of the X-Men. Jim Shooter and Frank Springer present a story in which Dazzler, while making a movie, is beset by the anti-mutant public and has her powers permanantly altered.

Nebula Maker, to be published by Dodd-Meade, is a new printing of the Olaf Stapeldon story this time coupled with 80 black-and-white illustrations by Jim Starlin.

The FF Annual this year, number 17, will be a sequel to **Fantastic Four #2** and explain what happened to the town with the Skrulls-cum-cows.

Ann Nocenti and Carl Potts, acting as an editorial team, are filling the void left by Al Milgrom.

Bob Budiansky has also recently taken a position as editor.

US 1 will be a 12-issue maxi series and not a continuing title.

Walt Simonson has re-designed the Dire Wraiths which appear in **Rom**.

Fire & Ice is indefinitely delayed.

Avengers #235 will feature Bob Budiansky as the penciller in place of the previously announced Al Milgrom. Milgrom and Joe Sinnott will do the cover.

Brett Breeding is inking **Hawkeye**.

"Marghinese" is a new story by Jo Duffy and Kent Williams which is scheduled to appear in **Epic #19**.

Dan Reed will pencil **Indiana Jones #9** and **#10**.

Cap will not attend Wolverine's wedding after all.

Ron Frenz and Danny Bulanadi are the art team on **Crystar #3**.

Klaus Janson is inking **Kull #3** and **Spiderman #244**.

The Thing #3 will be inked by Hilary Barta, Barta will then become the regular inker.

Kim DeMulder will be the Defenders' new inker.

Marvel Universe has been extended by two issues. One will feature the "Book of the Dead" and showcase apparantly deceased characters, the other will feature weaponry – swords, hammers and the like.

DC NEWS TIDBITS

DC will publish a monthly **Star Trek** comic book. No creative team has been chosen yet.

Rick Hoberg is the new penciller on **Captain Carrot** and **All Star**. He is also pencilling the first JLA annual over Paul Levitz's script.

Mike Grell will no longer write **Warlord**.

Both Alex Toth and Don Heck will be doing fill in issues of **Green Lantern**.

Superman Move Special #1 will be by Cary Bates and Curt Swan. The book will feature an adaptation of "Superman III".

DC Comics Presents #61 will be drawn by George Perez and written by Len Wein. In it Superman will team up with OMAC.

Best of DC Digest #40 features "Superman's Fabulous World of Krypton".

Superman #387 and **Action Comics #547** pit Superman against The Planeteer, a man who believes himself to be Alexander the Great.

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Meanwhile **Superman Annual #8** presents a long story drawn by Alex Toth and inked by Terry Austin and a short story in which Curt Swan appears as a character.

In **Legion of Super-Heroes #303**, the Emerald Empress takes control of Weber's World and attempts to parley it into domination of the Universe.

Legion Annual #2, by Paul Levitz and Dave Gibbons, features the wedding of Karate Kid and Queen Projectra.

Ernie Colon, the editor of Wonder Woman, Flash, and Green Lantern has resigned his editorial position to return to freelancing. He will edit Keith Giffen's Creeper mini-series and continue to draw **Amethyst**.

Colon has also sold a novel to DC which he will also illustrate. He is co-creating a new juvenile series along with Len Herman of Harvey Comics. The new series will be titled **Super Jr's**.

All-Star #25 introduces a new group of super-powered beings who will "soon play an important role in the DC Universe."

Captain Carrot and **Night Force** have both been cancelled.

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GRIMJACK!
A.K.A. JOHN GAUNT... MERCENARY, ENFORCER, INVESTIGATOR, BODY-GUARD, KILLER. JOHN GAUNT... GRIMJACK! THIS SWORD FOR HIRE!
DESIGN:
TM & © 1989 First Comics, Inc.

FIRST COMICS, INC.

"Grimjack" is the new supporting feature in **Starslayer**, beginning in issue #10.

The feature is the creation of John Ostrander and will be pencilled by Timothy Truman.

Truman is a graduate of the Joe Kubert School of Cartooning, has contributed work to DC's **Sgt. Rock** and **Johah Hex**, and has worked with Tom Yeates on **Swamp Thing**. Truman has also contributed work to **Creative Computing** and various SPI and TSR Publications. He recently designed a series of Dungeons and Dragons figurines.

John Gaunt – Grimjack – has been a gladiator, a cop, and a secret agent. He is a combination hard-boiled detective and intergalactic warrior, an inter-dimensional adventurer, a weapons and martial arts expert, and a magician. And most of all — a mercenary.

PC "For the NEW Era in Comics"

Somerset Holmes is a new book written by Bruce Jones and drawn by Brent Anderson, a team which many will remember from **Ka-Zar**. Somerset Holmes is a woman searching for her identity and the reason why thugs seem to repeatedly attack her. A strip by Al Williamson entitled "Cliff Hanger" will also appear in the book.

Twisted Tales #4 features a John Bolton cover and story plus a nine-page story by Don Lomax [?] and a short story by Bruce Jones.

Jack Kirby has created Captain Glory, Bombast, and Night Glida.

ECLIPSE COMICS

Aztec Ace involves a time traveller from the far future who teams up with an American woman from 1940 to outwit the Ebonati Brotherhood.

Doug Moench will write the book while Michael Hernandez provides the pencils.

According to the publisher, Aztec Ace "is a rousing adventure series, taking us through time and space, in one and many dimensions. The Ebonati, who operate from the innermost ring of the mysterious Golden Meld, are trying to manipulate history to serve their own needs, and Ace finds himself in a frantic and desperate struggle to prevent them."

The first issue will be 48 pages with subsequent issues appearing every six weeks as 32-page, Baxter paper

books. Cat Yronwode will edit the series which is scheduled to debut this summer.

Bruce Miller will ink "The Scythe" and **Sabre**.

Sabre is now printed in Spain by Toutain Editor and in France by Editones Deesse.

"Alex Toth will be a regular on **Black Hood** beginning with issue 1," accorcording to Red Circle's March 3 press release. This was accompanied by Gray Morrow pages of the character.

Steve Ditko's first job will appear in **Fly 2**.

Rich Buckler has relinquished "Steel Sterling" strip to Robert Kanigher.

Bill Dubay and Rudy Nebres will be producing the first issue of **The Comet**; Robin Snyder and Steve Ditko will do a "Hangman" feature for the same book. Steranko will be doing five covers for **The Fly** while Alex Toth will do covers for **Black Hood #2-4**.

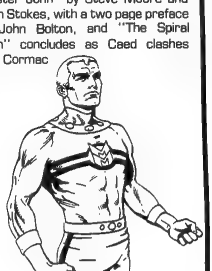
Blue Ribbon Special Edition will be Red Circle's first graphic album. It will contain reprints from the first four issues of the **Adventures of the Fly**: "Strange World of the Fly", "The Fly Strikes", "The Buzz Gun", "Come Into My Parlor", "Marco's Eyes", "The Master of Junk-Ri-La" and "One of Our Skyscrapers is Missing". The work is by Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Al Williamson.

Life With Archie #238 will be the 25th Anniversary Issue.

QUALITY COMICS

Quality Communications, the publisher of **Warrior**, has announced two new titles. The company was first formed by Dez Skinn in 1976 as Starburst Magazines Limited. The company suspended operations when Dez Skinn accepted a position as head of Marvel UK. Last year the publisher resumed operations.

The eleventh issue of **Warrior** will continue the "Marvelman," "V for Vendetta", and "Laser Eraser and Pressbutton" series. "The Legend of Prester John" by Steve Moore and John Stokes, with a two page preface by John Bolton, and "The Spiral Path" concludes as Caed clashes with Cormac



Marvelman is the first single-character title to be released by **Quality Communications. Cover art**work is by Mick Austin while the interior features the work of Alan Davis, Ray Parker and Don Lawrence. The character, which appeared as a feature in the first twelve issues of **Warrior**, was originally published by L. Miller and Son from 1954 until 1963 in 370 issues. Marvelman began as a continuation of Captain Marvel when reprints of that character became unavailable. "Big Ben" will be the supporting feature.

Halls of Horror is a revival of the old **House of Hammer** title. This title and **Starburst** were the company's original two magazines published until 1975 when Skinn went to work for Marvel UK.

FANTACO

Deja-Vu #2 will feature additional early stories of Jeff Jones, Michael Kaluta, and Berni Wrightson.

The front cover is a Kulata piece entitled "The Very Same Dream Night After Night"

The material originally appeared in **Gothic Blimp Works**, **Swank**, **Spasm**, and **Abyss**.

Alien Encounters has been re-released. **Dial H for Hembeck** has finally seen release.

Fantaco Chronicles, which began life as a series of magazines each devoted to a different Marvel character, no longer features Marvel-related material. The sixth issue centers on Kitchen Sink while the seventh profiles Rip Off Press. The company is currently negotiating with DC Comics to do official DC character magazines similar to the Marvel-oriented issues.

FANTAGOR COMICS

Mutant World is the newest release planned by Fantagor Press. The book will be printed in color, on glossy paper and square bound.

The story will be that of Dimento and his struggles in a weird world of strange mutants. A "modified" version was published by Warren with much of the dialogue changed. This restored version contains eight new pages.

Feature News Preview

Bill Mantlo is one of the true Marvel mainstay writers, a writer who has handled virtually every major character in the Marvel Universe. He has had definite peaks of excellence, such as the early issues of the **Micronauts** done in conjunction with Mike Golden, and he has had some equally definite troughs, particularly in the late 1970s.

Now Bill Mantlo seems to be firmly established in a winning streak. He seems to have hit it hot on all of his titles. The **Hulk** has never been more popular, and never more interesting than when showing Bruce Banner's reactions to being in control of the Hulk's brute power—a mild, timid man harnessing a raging monster. **Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spiderman** is actually outselling **Spiderman** as first Ed Hannigen and now Al Milgrom have breathed new life into Mantlo's stories. And even the **Micronauts**, perhaps the weakest of the Mantlo-written titles, has enjoyed a temporary minor surge with the old but still interesting combination of strange worlds and 1930s-style gangsterism.

Cloak and Dagger is the newest book from Mantlo and it too looks to be both popular and interesting. The art will be by relative newcomer Rick Leonardi and veteran inker—possibly the premiere inker working today—Terry Austin. The concept involves all of the elements which make for good storytelling: family relationships, dark mystery, danger, revenge, and a little bit of humanitarian sweetness-and-light.

And the dark and light are quite literal. The book will be a four issue mini-series in the format recently adopted by virtually all comic book publishers and will be immediately followed by a graphic novel starring the characters as well as Spiderman.

According to Mantlo, "Cloak and Dagger originally appeared in **Peter Parker #64**, which was written as a fill-in job to prove to Tom DeFalco that I could write Spiderman after my disastrous period in the late '70s. I knew they were good; Ed Hannigan knew they were good when he designed them based on my description of the concept behind each character; Tom knew they were good; but we really weren't prepared for the enormous response we got to that book. Peter Parker had kind of been floundering up to that point and suddenly people bought the issue and took notice. It looked different.It was Hannigan and Milgrom—the book just had a completely different look which excited people. It was very graphic and dark and gritty and seamy which is what I had intended for Cloak and Dagger anyway and it also proved that I could write a good Spiderman. To this day I think that was probably the best comic book I have ever written."

In some ways the steps taken with the Peter Parker book seemed to follow in the footsteps of what had been done on **Daredevil**, causing the surge of popularity enjoyed by that

WE ARE CLOAK...
...AND DAGGER.
BUT WE WERE NOT ALWAYS SO. WE WERE ONCE RUNAWAY CHILDREN WHO FELL INTO THE GRASP OF EVIL MEN WHO PREYED UPON US!
WE WERE LOCKED UP--EXPERIMENTED ON. THEY TRIED TO USE US TO TEST A NEW ADDICTIVE DRUG.
THE DRUG KILLED THE OTHERS...
BUT WE SURVIVED...
© 1983 Marvel Comics

title. Previously both books had had a much lighter, more open, airier feel which was replaced by a closed in, darker approach. Was Mantlo and Hannigan's approach affected by the work that Miller was doing? "I admired Frank tremendously for what he was doing with Daredevil, but it had always been my feeling that Spiderman should be a dark, night character, very graphic in the art. It just seemed impossible to get artists to do that because everyone of them had come out of the Romita school where Spiderman was kind of a pop character. He was our Superman. Ditko did some really unique and wonderful things, but Romita and Buscema and the artists followed and Spiderman became homoginized and became a more corporate character.

"You had all of the silly joke issues: Aunt May marrying Doctor Octopus and Doctor Octopus becoming a drunk and things like that. Things which I always felt were totally opposed to what the character should be or could be. I told Tom, when he asked me to do the book, 'Look,I'll only do it if I can make this character as vital as what Frank has done with Daredevil and my way of doing that is to make it very graphic, grimy, seamy, gritty and make the stories based in New York City at night for the most part, real situations dealing with real kinds of crime that affect urban life.' " The more we talked about it the more we agreed that it was a good idea to try it. Ed [Hannigan] seemed to be the perfect artist. Tom said, 'Go ahead and show me a story.' The first story I did was the Cloak and Dagger story. He said, 'Okay, you've got the assignment.' "

Prior to that issue Hannigan was not known for a dark and gritty art style. In fact he had been a less-than-popular artist primarily known for a very bland look to his work. I asked Mantlo whether the new approach to the work had been discussed with Hannigan prior to his being assigned the art chores.

"You've got to think about inkers. The credits are wrong on that issue. It was Milgrom inking Hannigan and not Mooney. Hannigan's layouts are just standard storytelling layouts. Ed excells when he's drawing shadows and doing graphic Will Eisner-style art. You don't do that in layouts, you just give the figures and motion and let the inker cover it. Jim Mooney is an adaquate but not very inspired inker who couldn't convey anything that wasn't given to him. Even when it is given to him, he tends to homoginize it. Milgrom came on that issue—the credits are wrong, it should not say Mooney— and Ed did full pencils. So you have Ed doing very graphic full pencils and Al, who's a very graphic inker to begin with, complimenting him perfectly. There was a change in the sense that Ed was doing full pencils and we had a different inker embelishing what Ed was doing instead of working against him. I think that the best art Ed has ever done has been with Milgrom. I think that Giordano [Dick Giordano] at DC is homoginizing Ed again.

"Ed was in his own way competing with Miller because he loved Daredevil and what was going on there. He was probably subconsciously doing graphic art t compete with Frank which fit perfectly with what I wanted to do with Spiderman. So for a tumultous ten issues, while Ed tried to meet deadlines, we had a lot of fun and good times and out of that came Cloak and Dagger.

"The way they arose was that for years I had been sitting around trying to create new characters. That has got to be the hardest thing a Marvel writer can ever undertake. You go through dictionaries, you go through encyclopedias, you look at movies, you look at books, you look at television, anything you can get inspiration from and try to come up with new charac-

CHAPTER TWO
THE DETECTIVE
THE 21ST PRECINCT 39TH STREET AND 9TH AVENUE
I'VE NEVER SEEN SYMPTOMS LIKE THESE BEFORE.
PERIPHERAL VASOCONSTRICTIONS... RAPID PULSES... UNCONTROLLABLE SHIVERING ...DILATED PUPILS...AND THEIR SKIN HAS TAKEN ON A STRANGE PALLOR, WHICH IS ALMOST BLUE IN COLOR.
WE FOUND 'EM THAT WAY, DOC, IN AN ALLEY BEHIND A PINBALL PARLOR!
© 1983 Marvel Comics

ters. I've come to the conclusion that the harder you try to come up with new characters the less you are able to do it. What all this does is like putting fertilizer in your head. One night I was sitting there absolutely blank and the name Cloak and Dagger popped into my head and I had a picture in my mind of what they would look like, what their powers were, and what they would do. It was so obvious that the first thing I did was jump up and go to various comic book encyclopedias to be sure that nobody had done it before. I was astounded that nobody had.

"I talked to Ed about them and then sat down and did the plot based on a trip I had made to Ellis Island which had very strong emotional ties for me because my grandfather came to this country through Ellis Island. They forced him to change his name because he couldn't spell it. I was very aware of the history of the place and it's a very spooky and bizarre place in New York Harbor. You get there by ferry. There's monstrous buildings collapsing in on themselves. I kind of got a sense of what had gone on there. It seemed the perfect origin of characters that I had dreamed up a day or two before. It all came together in what I consider to be my best story.

"The response was so incredible...for a book that usually got maybe 20 letters suddenly we were hit with 100. I knew that they had to come back again."

Six issues of the Peter Parker book were to pass before the characters appeared again. But after those six issues, almost beyond the control of the creative staff of the book, momentum began to build for their reappearance. As Mantlo puts it, "Comics are a very organic process. You don't plan things, they kind of grow on you. I had other stories to tell.

"The whole concept of Cloak and Dagger is that they are mysterious. So what we've done is, every six months, more by accident than by intent, they've appeared in Peter Parker. They're going to appear in this month's **Marvel Team Up Annual** and we'll get a little more of a revelation about them. The mini-series starts about the same time as the Annual comes out. We set up a little more of who they are, what their mission is and how they carry it out, placing them in a place called the Holy Ghost Church of 42nd Street. We establish that their mission is to punish those who prey on others. We put them in a church with a priest who has a lot of moral conflicts with their mission and the way they go about carrying it out and maybe more than a little desire for Dagger, who knocks anybody's

eyes out. There's a detective who wants to punish them because she considers them vigilantes operating outside the law. They are the two major subcharacters of the mini-series."

Up until this point the tactics of Cloak and Dagger seem similar to those of such characters as the Punisher, Charles Bronson in "Death Wish", some of the portrayals of the Batman or other such revenge-driven stalkers of the night. This does not seem to be the direction in which Mantlo intends to move the characters.

"We're going to change that slightly in the development I've been working on wherein Dagger can control her powers so that she can cure others addicted to drugs. What she's going to start doing is curing people addicted while punishing those who addict them. In that sense, the Punisher never cared for the victims. Charles Bronson never really cared for the victims; they were just there to be knocked down so he could punish those who knocked them down. Cloak is the negative and she's got to try to control Cloak. She has to try to keep Cloak from consuming the very people she's trying to save. That is going to be the crux of the second and third story. They need each other.

"She sustains him with her light and at one point he saves her life with his darkness. They have a mutual symbiotic relationship. I should preface this with the fact that Ed was supposed to do the mini-series. He did some really beautiful layouts and sketches. Stuff I thought was some of his most inspired work, and then in the middle of it, Ed, who has always had trouble sustaining an effort for a very long period of time, decided he would rather concentrate on covers and not do any more storytelling work for a while. I was really disappointed. Ed is going to be listed as my co-creator on the mini-series."

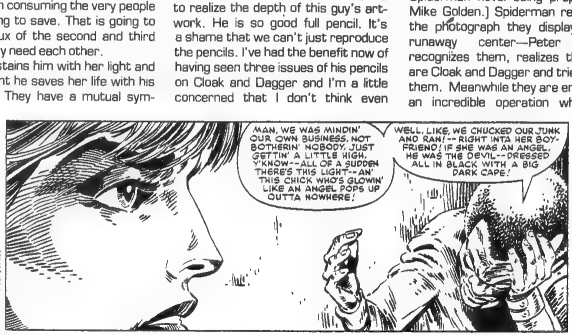
The artist on the series is Rick Leonardi, an artist who has previously worked with Mantlo on both Thor and Spiderman, but who is regarded as a very bland and uninspired penciller. As Mantlo relates it, once again the inker seems to be at fault as Leonardi has been inked by the self-same Mooney who homoginized Hannigan and by Chic Stone, a very bland mainstrem stylist.

"My fears were totally allayed when I got the pencils on the first issue because I could see that they were beautiful. I think that when you see Rick inked by Terry [Austin] or, as we are hoping, by himself, you are going to realize the depth of this guy's artwork. He is so good full pencil. It's a shame that we can't just reproduce the pencils. I've had the benefit now of having seen three issues of his pencils on Cloak and Dagger and I'm a little concerned that I don't think even Terry is accurately inking him, which leaves the problem open of who would. If Terry Austin can't do it, who can?

"The inks are radically different from the pencils. Much sketchier with much more pen work than I would have expected or liked. I'd rather see Rick inked as dark and as gloomy as the pencils are. But I don't think that the fans are going to argue with Terry Austin. I think that what's going to happen is that Rick is going to start inking his own covers to show the difference in style. When we do the graphic novels he'll be inking himself."

This calmly dropped statement was the first that I had heard that there was going to be a graphic novel devoted to Cloak and Dagger. I was interviewing Mantlo about the mini-series and yet I did not know how far the plans had actually gone.

"Following the mini-series which will develop them and end with their origin there's going to be a Spiderman/Cloak and Dagger graphic novel in which their parents come to New York seeking them out. [This is obviously a different novel from the Spiderman novel being prepared by Mike Golden.] Spiderman recognizes the photograph they display at the runaway center—Peter Parker recognizes them, realizes that they are Cloak and Dagger and tries to find them. Meanwhile they are engaged in an incredible operation wherein a


MAN, WE WAS MINDIN' OUR OWN BUSINESS, NOT BOTHERIN' NOBODY, JUST GETTIN' A LITTLE HIGH, Y'KNOW--ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE'S THIS LIGHT--AN' THIS CHICK WHO'S GLOWIN' LIKE AN ANGEL POPS UP OUTTA NOWHERE!
WELL, LIKE WE CHUCKED OUR JUNK AND RAN!-- RIGHT INTO HER BOY-FRIEND! IF SHE WAS AN ANGEL, HE WAS THE DEVIL--DRESSED ALL IN BLACK WITH A BIG DARK CAPE!
© 1983 Allen of Comics

LISTINGS

MARVEL

Shipping 6/7/83

THE THING #4 - Written by John Byrne, pencils by Ron Wilson, inks by Hilary Barta. Ben Grimm knows the feeling of being "I, Monster," which is why he and Lockjaw come to the aid of a woman who is caring for a misshapen monstrosity that the townspeople would like to destroy.

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KA-ZAR #28 - Featuring the writing debut of Michael Carlin, and the pencils of Armando Gil. There's "Trouble in Paradise" as Ka-Zar proposes to Shanna and then goes on a mission to Save Pangea.

RED SONJA #2 - [Limited Series] - Written by Tom DeFalco, breakdowns by Mary Wilshire, finishes by Nestor Redondo. Sonja owes a "Blood Debt" to the man who rescued her from death, only to die himself shortly afterwards. Her quest for vengeance leads her to meet her own alter-ego.

NEW MUTANTS #8 - Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Sal Buscema. "The Road to Rome" is where the Amazon River leads the New Mutants, accompanied by Sunspot's explorer mother.

DAREDEVIL #198 - Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by William Johnson, inks by Mike Mignola. In Japan, Daredevil comes face to face with the mysterious Dark Wind, the group behind the attempted resurrection of Bullseye.

ROM ANNUAL #2 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Ian Akin and Brian Garvey. Introduces the exiles from Galador known as the Space Knight Squadron.

Shipping 6/14/83

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #245 - Written by Roger Stern, pencils by John Romita, Jr., inks by Klaus Janson. The return of the Hobgoblin.

CAPTAIN AMERICA #286 - Written by J.M. De. Matteis, pencils by Mike Zeck, inks by John Beatty. Cap

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meets Luther Manning, Deathlock the Demolisher.

THOR #336 - Written by Alan Zelenetz, pencils by Mark Bright. The fate of Jane Foster.

INDIANA JONES #10 - Written by David Michelinie, pencils by Dan Reed, inks by Danny Bulanadi. The conclusion of the saga of the Hovitos idol.

U. S. 1 #6 [Limited Series] - Written by Al Milgrom, pencils by Frank Springer. U.S. 1 and his intrepid supporting cast face another plot of the Highwayman as the mystery deepens.

HAWKEYE #2 [Limited Series] - Written and pencilled by Mark Gruenwald. Hawkeye is on the run from Cross Technological.

DR. STRANGE #61 - Written by Roger Stern, pencils by Dan Green, inks by Terry Austin. "Power Be the Prize" of the Darkhold Book, the mysterious tome that could either spread vampire evil across the earth

or end it for all time. Also starring Hannibal King, Frank Drake and Blade.

RETURN OF THE JEDI #1 (Limited Series) - Written by Archie Goodwin, art by Al Williamson and Carlos Garzon.

ILLYANA & STORM #1 (Limited Series) - Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by John Buscema, inks by Tom Palmer. Beginning the exploration of Illyana's seven lost years, and the introduction of the woman known only as Cat.

MARVEL TEAM-UP ANNUAL #6 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Ron Frenz. Spider-Man and The New Mutants plus Cloak and Dagger.

MARVEL/DC PRESENTS #2: THE JUSTICE LEAGUE & THE AVENGERS - Plotted by Gerry Conway, scripted by Roy Thomas, pencils by George Perez, inks by Dick Giordano.

Shipping 6/21/83

INCREDIBLE HULK #288 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema.

AVENGERS #236 - Written by Roger Stern, pencils by Al Milgrom, inks by Joe Sinnott. Twentieth Anniversary issue, featuring the Avengers' new logo, Spider-Man's latest tryout for the team, and the return of the Juggernaut.

ROM #47 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Ian Akin and Brien Garvey. "One Man's Toys are Another Man's Terror" as Rom is attacked by the robot known as Brynocki.

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #151 - Written by Michael Fleischer, pencils by John Buscema, inks by Ernie Chan. Conan encounters a bizarre race in the "Vale of the Half Men."

MARVEL TALES #156 - Reprints Spider-Man #18.

POWER MAN/IRON FIST #98 - Written by Kurt Busiek, pencils and inks by Ernie Chan. Beginning the build-up to issue #100. The return of Shades and Commanche.

G.I. JOE #16 - Written by Larry Hama, pencils by Mike Vosburg, inks by Jon D'Agostino. It's a "Night Attack" as we have a showdown between the Joes and Cobra at the Treasury Building in Washington, D.C.

X-MEN #174 - Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Paul Smith, inks by Bob Wiacek. The aftermath of Wolverine's wedding and the prelude to Scott's.

CLOAK & DAGGER #1 (Limited Series) - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Rick Leonardi, inks by Terry Austin.

Shipping 6/28/83

FANTASTIC FOUR #259 - A John Byrne Production as, with Doctor Doom pulling the strings, Terrax and the Silver Surfer fight to determine who is the most powerful herald.

MARVEL TEAM-UP #134 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Ron Frenz, inks by Mike Esposito. Co-starring Jack of Hearts.

IRON MAN #175 - Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by Luke McDonnell, inks by Steve Mitchell. Tony Stark finds himself in a strange city with no memory of how he got there.

PETER PARKER #83 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Al Milgrom. Spider-Man's confrontation with the Black Cat, plus the fate of the Punisher.

DEFENDERS #124 - Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Don Perlin, inks by Kim DeMulder. The lead-in to #125 as we learn the entire secret behind the Elf and the Tribunal, and the reason why the Defenders must break up.

STAR WARS #76 - Written by Jo Duffy, pencils by Ron Frenz, inks by Tom Palmer. Lando Calrissian and Mon are trapped in the Empire-controlled citadel of Gamander.

OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #10 - From Shield through Submariner, featuring John Byrne's Snowbird, the Space Phantom by Frank Miller and Starfox by Jim Starlin.

ALPHA FLIGHT #3 - By John Byrne. Continuing the secret of Marrina's past.

WHAT IF #41 - Written by Alan Zelenetz, pencils by Mark Sylvestri. "What If Submariner Had Not Lost His Memory?" outlines the story of an Atlantis never before seen and Namor's power struggle with his cousin, Prince Byrrah.

CAPTAIN AMERICA ANNUAL #7 - Written by Peter Gillis, pencils by Brian Postman. The absolute final story of the cosmic Cube, guest starring the Aquarian, A.I.M., and the Shaper.

MARVEL MAGAZINES:

MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL #28: KRULL [shipping 6/28] - Written by David Michelinie, pencils by Bret Blevins. The story of Prince Colwyn and Princess Lyssa of the world of Krull.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #92 [Shipping 6/14] - Written by Michael Reischer, pencils and inks by Alfredo Alcala.

BIZARRE ADVENTURES #36 [Shipping 6/21] - Revenge is the theme. Contributors are Larry Hama ["Dr. Deth"], Mike Carlin, Paul Smith and Steven Grant.

MARVEL AGE #7 [Shipping 6/21]

FROM THE EPIC LINE:

COYOTE #3 - Written by Steve Englehart, art by Steve Leialoha. Guest-starring the Djinn.

SHIPPING MAY 16th

VIGILANTE POSTCARD - A 4" x 6" postcard with Keith Pollard's rendition. In full color.

SHIPPING JUNE 7

DC SAMPLER - A 32-page book that gives a sample of DC. Includes The New Teen Titans, The Omega Men, The Legion of Super Heroes, and Amethyst. Cover designed by Ed Hannigan.

SHIPPING JUNE 14th

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #219 - Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Chuck Patton, inks by Romeo Tanghal. The annual get-together of the JLA and the JSA.

AMETHYST, PRINCESS OF GEMWORLD #6 - Story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, art by Ernie Colon.

ARAK, SON OF THUNDER #26 - Story by Roy and Danette Thomas, art by Ron Randall and Alfredo Alcala.

BLACKHAWK #263 - Story by Mark Evenier, art by Dan Spiegle.

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST #41 - Starring those whimsical tots, Sugar & Spike, in stories by Sheldon Mayer.

DC COMICS PRESENTS #62 - "Born on the Fourth of July." Story by Bob Rozakis and Dan Mishkin, pencilled by Irv Novick.

THE FURY OF FIRESTORM #17 - Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Pat Broderick, inks by Rodin Rodriguez. A new female foe is introduced - Firehawk. She's the result of a diabolical experiment to duplicate the circumstances under which Firestorm was created.

WONDER WOMAN #308 - Story by Marv Wolfman, art by Keith Pollard. The saga of a man who believes in justice for -- and above -- all.

BATMAN ANNUAL #9 - "The Player On the Other Side." Story by Mike W. Barr, art by Mike Golden. The Batman battles his opposite number, The Wraith, a mysterious costumed assassin whose parents were killed by a policeman the same night Bruce Wayne's parents were murdered.

GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW #1 - Beginning the first issue of DC's new reprint book.

SHIPPING JUNE 21st

BATMAN #364 - Story by Doug Moench.

THE FLASH #326 - Story by Cary Bates, art by Carmine Infantino and Dennis Jensen.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #36 - Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by Keith Pollard, inks by Romeo Tanghal.

SHIPPING JUNE 28th

GREEN LANTERN #169 - Story by Keith Giffen and Robin Snyder, art by Alex Toth.

BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS #3 - "Bitter Orange!" Stroy by Mike W. Barr, art by Jim Aparo. A bitter odor permeates the air of Gotham City — a deadly gas released by the minions of Agent Orange.

THE DARING NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRL #12 - "Guess Who's About To Die!" Story by Paul

Kupperberg, pencils by Carmine Infantino, inks by Bob Oksner.

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #304 - "Siege Perilous." Story by Paul Levitz, art by Keith Giffen and Larry mahlstedt. Karate Kid and Queen Projectra have resigned, leaving the Legion down to 21 members and the Legion Academy members very excited.

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #321 - The final issue of the longest running DC myster/horror title.

SGT. ROCK #381 - "Sergeant on a Wire" is by Robert Kanigher and Frank Redondo.

WARLORD #74 - "Home Again, Home Again." Cary Burkett, writer; Dan Jurgens, penciller. Morgan decides to return to Shamballah with his new friend, Krystovar. They hope the remaining computer banks can supply some clues to a puzzling Atlanteen cassette Morgan has discovered.

RONIN (BOOK THREE) - By Frank Miller.

G.I. COMBAT #258 - Continuing the historic Haunted Tank series with Chapter 2 of "Battle Zone: Eternity"

THE OMEGA MEN #7 - Story by Roger Slifer, pencils by Tod Smith, inks by Mike DeCarlo. The long-awaited origin of The Citadel.

THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #18 - Story by Marty Pasko, pencils by Steve Bissette, inks by John Totleben.

SUPERMAN #383 - "The Kid Who Played Superman." Story by Cary Bates, pencils by Curt Swan, inks by Dave Hunt.

WARLORD ANNUAL #2 - Cary Burkett, writer; Dan Jurgens, penciller; Bob Smith, inker. Lizard dogs and an artificial race of beast men introduce Travis Morgan to the brutal world of New Atlantis.

SHIPPING JULY 5th

ACTION COMICS #538 - Story by Marv Wolfman, art by Gil Kane. In order to save two twins from dying, Superman must bring a vaccine across the world, encountering difficulties allong the way.

ALL-STAR SQUADRON #26 - Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Jerry Ordway, inks by Mike Machlan.

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS #12 - "The Lands Beyond Atlantis." Written by Doug Moench, pencilled by Jan Duursema, inked by Tom Mandrake.

CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW! #20 - The final issue of the regular series stars Gorilla Grodd (that old flash foe) and The Chengeling (that young New Teen Titan) in a battle royal with The Zoo Crew caught in the middle.

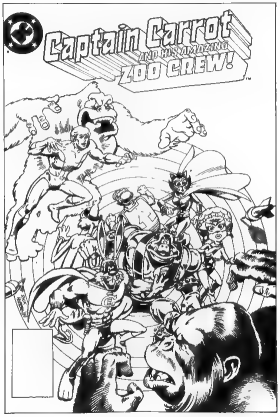
CAMELOT 3000 #9 - Story by Mike W. Barr, pencils by Brian Bolland, inks by Terry Austin.

DETECTIVE COMICS #531 - Story by Doug Moench.

JONAH HEX #77 - "Over the Wall!" Michael Fleisher, scripter; Dick Ayers, penciller; Tony DeZuniga, inker.

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY - "Land of the Rising Sunburst" by Paul Kupperberg, writer; Alex Saviuk, guest penciller.

THE SWORD OF THE ATOM #2 - Jan Strand, writer; Gil Kane, artist.



WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #296
Story by David Anthony Kraft, pencils by Adrian Gonzales. Conflict between Superman and The Batman continues as a result of the incident causing The Batman to quit the JLA and form The Outsiders. Meanwhile, a new group of mysterious villains is introduced. Part 1 of 3.

FIRST COMICS, INC.

Shipping the second week in June

AMERICAN FLAGG #1 - Cover by Howard Chaykin. "American Flagg" written, pencilled and inked by Howard Chaykin. Plus a special American Flagg fun page by Chaykin.

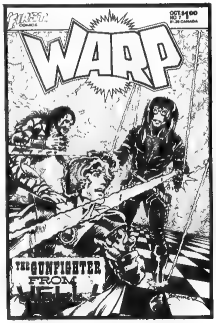
WARP #7 - Cover by Frank Brunner. "To Find Infinity," adapted and pencilled by Frank Brunner, scripted by Peter Gillis, and inked by Mike Gustovich. "The Dogs of War, chapter 3: Axe and Slaughter," written by John Ostrander, pencilled by Lenin Delsol and inked by Bruce Patterson.

JON SABLE, FREELANCE #5 - Cover by Mike Grell. "Killzone: The Origin, Part 3," written, pencilled and inked by Mike Grell.

STARSLAYER #9 - Cover by Lenin Delsol and Mike Gustovich. "Flotilla,"

written by John Ostrander, pencilled by Lenin Delsol, and inked by Mike Gustovich.

E-MAN #7 - Cover by Joe Staton. "Panic in the Pulpit!" written by Martin Pasko, pencilled by Joe Staton, and inked by Rick Burchett. Nexus by Steve Rude and Mike Baron, one page.



"For the NEW Era in Comics"

QUEST...AND OTHER TALES #1 - Jeff Jones.

SOMERSET HOLMES #1 - Bruce Jones and Brent Anderson. A new heroine debuts. Somerset Holmes is locked in a search for her identity. Back-up feature by Al Williamson, "Cliff Hanger," is a thirties "period piece."

TWISTED TALES #4 - Written and edited by Bruce Jones. John Bolton cover and story. Other features include: a Don Lomax, and a Bruce Jones.

WORLD of WOOD #2 - Wallace Wood. Second collection of Wood's work, which originally appeared in the Warren magazines.

CAPTAIN VICTORY #12 - Jack Kirby. The climax of Captain Victory's origin, "The Lost Ranger." Back-up feature is an eight-pager drawn by Kent Williams, and scripted by Bruce Jones.

EDGE OF CHAOS #2 - Gray Morrow.

ELRIC OF MELNIBONE #3 - Roy Thomas, P. Craig Russell, Michael T. Gilbert.

GROO THE WANDERER #5 - Sergio Arragones. Groo goes on a nautical odyssey.

ECLIPSE COMICS

Eclipse Comics

DESTROYER DUCK #4 (shipping 6/27) - Destroyer Duck goes to Hoqoom to battle Godcorp on foreign shores, in a story by Steve Gerber, Jack Kirby and Alfredo Alcala. Plus, The Starling by Jerry Siegel and Val Mayerik. Cover by Kirby/Alcala.

THE DNAgents #4 (Shipping 6/13) The DNAgents learn more about their creators in "Who Killed Angela Krell the First Time?" and we learn more about them in "Secrets of the DNAgents." All by Evanier, Meugniot and Gordon.

SABRE #5 (shipping 6/1) - Don McGregor and Billy Graham and new inker Bruce Miller show us giant robotic butterflies amidst the radioactive wastelands of Oklahoma, as they're chased by Joyful Slaughter's revenge-driven army. And in "The Cost of Freedom, Part 2," by B.C. Boyer, the Incredible Seven enter Rileth's underground headquarters. Cover by Kent Williams.

MS. TREE'S THRILLING DETECTIVE ADVENTURES #3 (Shipping 6/13) - The conclusion to "Death Do Us Part." Ms. Tree discovers who killed the honeymoon couple...and why. By Max Collins and Terry Beatty. Plus, Mike Mist, the Scythe by Dean Mullaney, Ellis Goodson and Bruce Miller.

ECLIPSE MONTHLY #1 (Shipping 6/1) - Introducing: Cap'n Quick and the Foozle by Marshall Rogers, Static by Steve Ditko, Dope by Trina, The Masked Man by Boyer, and a new Don McGregor story. Cover designed by Rogers, with each artist drawing their own characters.

peter pan

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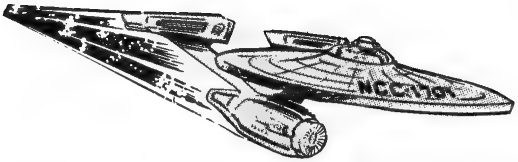

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ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS is where the Star Trek fan can journey to have his wildest dreams fulfilled. *EI* is now in its fifth year of publication and has now hit a regular quarterly schedule. Being so close to Los Angeles, it is the only major ST zine with access to the personalities and artists responsible for the continuing ST saga as evidenced by our early reports on the film and our recent interviews with Dorothy Fontana and Greg Jein. Future issues will include a spectacular feature on the designs and props done for *ST:TMP* by *Brick Price 'Miniatures* (who built the ships for *Project: UFO* and other shows) as well as an article by Dorothy Fontana on her Star Trek animated episode, "Yesteryear" with special artwork accompanying it done especially for *EI* by Ron Wilber.

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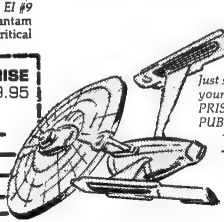

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Interview Conducted by Hal Schuster

CF: When did you first become interested in comics?

Miller: Since I was a little kid. When I was a little kid I read Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes. Later on, when I was in my early teens, I got into Spiderman and the Fantastic Four. A rather traditional introduction.

CF: Did you continue to read and be interested in comics. I believe you mention in another interview that there was an interruption.

Miller: I followed the course that most people actually follow, it's just that at one point in my life I stopped being interested in comics. I discovered things like girls and that sort of thing and real books and movies; I maintained my interest in the form of comics, I just became less interested with the content.

CF: Was there a particular kind of comic book you were interested in at that time?

Miller: Super-heroes came to interest me less and less and at the time that was all that was really being published. I just became less interested when I started taking literature courses and such and discovering the world of fiction without pictures.

CF: What formal training, if any, did you receive?

Miller: There was formal training through high school. I took art classes, and drawing classes and art history classes and at the same time studied English. In fact I had two teachers, one my English teacher and one my art teacher, who both insisted that I follow their subject as a career. The art teacher wanted me to study art and the English teacher wanted me to study English. Incidentally, I found a way to do both.

CF: What do you consider yourself? John Byrne, for example, considers himself a writer who can draw.

Miller: I consider myself a cartoonist. I think that's the best word to describe what I do. I make stories with words and pictures. I couldn't consider myself a writer or an artist first. What I do is I'm a cartoonist.

CF: You couldn't seperate the one from the other; it's the combination of the two?

Miller: My whole interest and my whole job is to combine the two. Seperating them, even for the sake of argument, really doesn't mean that much to me. I think the form has suffered greatly because the discipline has to be split in two like that. It is a single craft that has been broken into an assembly line proces. It's not two seperate jobs; it's one job broken into several pieces and different people do it.

CF: That's probably why so many of the most popular works have been actually created by one man, whether it's Milton Caniff of Will Eisner...

Miller: Or two people who work so well in tandem that they might as well be the same person, like for the time

that Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams worked together so well. You read their stuff and you'd think that the two were one person because their thinking is so in concert.

CF: Which artists that preceeded you do you tend to identify with?

Miller: I absorb whatever I can. Whatever work excites me is bound to have some kind of an effect on me. When I started working in the field I started exploring what had been done and I discovered Bernie Krigstein and Will Eisner and I was completely wrapped up in what they did for a while. Now I'm studing Japanese comics ans French comics. They're obviously having an effect on what I do.

CF: If nothing else you're heroes are tending to go to Japan.

Miller: Right, they'll be going there.

CF: When you're approaching the comic page, do you find that you tend to fall into a particular school of artists, say like Noel Sickles and the artists who followed him or Neal Adams who seems to be following Stan Drake and establishing a very different type of approach?

Miller: What I'm after right now is to break free from following any particular school. Jean Giraud [Moebius] in France, under all the different names he used, is inspiring to me. He shows that an artist can explore any number of routes, depending on what the project is and depending on whether he wants to draw from himself or from what came before. I'm mainly trying to absorb as much as I can, to think as much as I can, to explore as much as I can, rather than deciding that I will follow a particular path and carry on a particular tradition. I'd rather just – it's really just a process of expanding and exploring rather than perpetuating.

CF: When you create a story page, do you tend to create the entire script and plot or do you tend to draw and the story kind of creates itself as you are laying out the visuals or...

Miller: I've worked in a variety of different methods. Ever since I started writing my own material, it's always been up to me how I proceed with it. The method that I've settled on, at least for the moment, it very old fashioned, very traditional. I plot my story and then I write myself an entire script and then I set about illustrating it. I'll often change the scripts as I'm illustrating it or change, in fact, the plot as I'm illustrating it, but I work from a very traditional outline with panel descriptions on the script page and everything.

CF: When you're creating a story do you fill in all of the background, as if you were creating a universe and then set your characters within it or do you tend to create those parts as you need them?

Miller: Once I had the concept together of Ronin I set out describing what sort of world he lived in, but the world that developed from it was very much an extension of the principal characters in the series. While I worked on very complete descriptions, in fact the entire country in the series, we never see anything but Manhattan. There's a lot of research, a lot of planning, there's a lot of history behind the characters that no one will ever see. But with that background I can write and know what I'm talking about.

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CF: It sounds very similar to a process that Robert Heinlein described in that he sets up every small detail about his entire universe and then he only shows the readers the parts that are relevant to the story he's telling, but he needs the background to know where everything fits.

Miller: Right.

CF: So you work on a similar process.

Miller: Well, it's necessary. To figure out how someone speaks, for example, you have to know their history very well. All that I would present is his speech but, by doing his background, I make his speech apply to his history right. I do things that imply a greater world. Without a greater world worked out, it really implies nothing.

CF: When you first started in comics, your first work was for Gold Key, is that correct?

Miller: My first work was for Gold Key Comics, yes.

CF: What did you do there?

Miller: I did some **Twilight Zone** comics.

CF: Were you drawing or drawing and writing?

Miller: Just drawing at the time.

CF: And it was being handled full-script?

Miller: Full-script every time at Gold Key; that's the way they work.

CF: Where did you go from there?

Miller: I worked for DC doing horror stories and weird war stories and that sort of thing. Then to Marvel – I'd been trying to break into Marvel all along. They were the tough ones to break into because they had no anthology titles. I hadn't even drawn a super-hero. I got an assignment of a character I'd never heard of named Doc Sampson. I set about trying to draw super-heroes and had a bitch of a time figuring out how to draw them because I was simply trying to draw muscular men. It was before I discovered the dynamics involved in drawing super-heroes. Once I discovered it, I got into it quite a bit, but it was a very difficult subject for me.

CF: This is where you mentioned you were taking a great deal of time to do each page.

Denny O'Neil and Frank Miller

LIKE THE MAN SAID-- THERE'S NO TIME FOR MOSSWINGS.
NATASHA, YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS.
SURE I DO. WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE WAY BACK.
MORE THAN FRIENDS...
FRIENDS.

Miller: Oh yes. It was ridiculous. I'd spend a week pencilling a single page.

CF: Was **Daredevil** the first regular series you did?

Miller: Absolutely.

CF: I guess at the time they were willing to give you **Daredevil**, even though you were a new artist, because it was considered a very low selling series.

Miller: I requested the title after doing several issues of **Peter Parker** that guest-starred Daredevil. I discovered that I liked this character that I had never read. Mary Jo Duffy took the chance along with Jim Shooter of letting me work on the series. At the time it was a very low profile title. I believe Gene Colan had run screaming off it by then, after doing about a million issues. It was a title that was doing poorly, so it was something that you could start a beginner on.

CF: You were working with Roger McKenzie at that time?

Miller: That's right, my first nine issues were done with him.

CF: Was he the first writer that you had worked with on a somewhat long term basis?

Miller: I had worked with Bill Mantlo for two issues; that

had been my longest run before that.

CF: Did your style mesh with Roger's?

Miller: Oh sure. It seemed to work out very well.

CF: Then you took over the writing chores after a period.

Miller: Eventually, yes.

CF: That's when the book began to turn around in sales I believe.

Miller: I think that's about when it happened.

CF: To what do you attribute the radical change in sales? You really didn't handle the character that much differently then the way the character was conceived, and yet the character had previously not sold well.

Miller: I would hope that the reason that the material sold was that it was energetic and sincere and the stories were good. It also introduced a very strong female character into the series, which is something I believe that the audience is generally very hungry for, because it's something relatively rare in comics. What I did was I just listened very closely whenever Denny spoke about writing comics and started using material that I'd been thinking about for a long time. I started playing with the character of Daredevil a great deal. I started trying to find ways for the character to work for me which is something that I could only do writing it myself.

CF: Do you feel that you actually changed the character?

Miller: I certainly updated him. There were many things about that character that simply wouldn't work in this decade. He had an origin that was very much a product of 1950s science-fiction movies. In fact it was the same origin of virtually every Marvel character.

CF: Radiation.

Miller: Yeah, Daredevil was bitten by a radioactive truck you might say. I also worked on integrating the super-hero into a world of crime. That's with the emphasis on civilian crime not super-villains. Many of the things that I did come from applying the 40s and 50s crime movies and crime fiction to a super-hero motif. That's something that hasn't been done recently and therefore got some attention.

CF: A lot of it seems to harken back to Will Eisner's Spirit a great deal. Was that conscious?

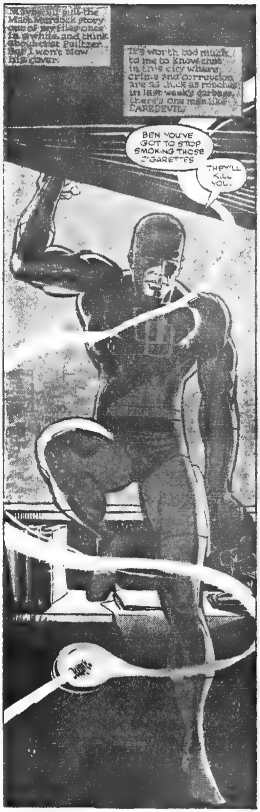
Miller: It was as conscious as could be because at the time I was completely enamored with Will Eisner's work. It had a very direct effect on me. I tend to research a lot of material and get very excited by certain material and it has an immediate effect on me.

CF: Are you familiar with Jerry Grandenetti's or Frank Robbins' work?

Miller: Oh yes, definitely Frank Robbins.

CF: There seems to be a certain amount of those styles in your work. Several times while you were working on Daredevil, he seemed to take on similarities to the Batman. Do you view them as similar characters?

Miller: I view them as operating in a similar world. They're very different. Batman is a revenge oriented character and Daredevil is a humanitarian. He's a very troubled humanitarian; he has a very hard time being a humanitarian but he is a humanitarian. He's concerned



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much more with the victim than the perpetrator of the crime. Batman's focus is on the perpetrator of the crime. Batman is getting his revenge on all criminals for what happened to his parents. Daredevil, on the other hand, is trying to keep people from becoming victims like his father was.

CF: Is that why he'll spare a criminal at times?

Miller: He'll spare a criminal because he's not the law.

CF: He's not like the early Batman who saw himself as the judge, the jury and the executioner so to speak.

Miller: No he's not. I think that's one of the things I underscore constantly.

CF: He works very much within the legal framework.

Miller: To some degree. He is still a vigilante. He's something of a hypocrite.

CF: It's interesting to have a combination of the lawyer and the super-hero outside the law.

Miller: Yeah, the lawyer and the vigilante -- that spells hypocrite to me. The last issue of Daredevil I did was mainly focusing on that - that he lived with a number of contradictions that would remain unresolved.

CF: As you mentioned, one of the very popular characters to emerge in this series is Electra. Yet no female lead character has seemed to be able to draw that much popularity in comics.

CF: Probably mostly I would think.

Miller: No, she's a real big hit among the girls too. Quite a bit of mail and quite a bit of attention at the conventions came from girls. We'll just have to see. Everybody is trying a lot of new things now in trying to expand the audience a bit. I think romance comics could make it. I think that one of the reasons that Daredevil succeeded for a long time was because it was, among other things, a romance comic -- a psychotic romance comic, but a romance comic.

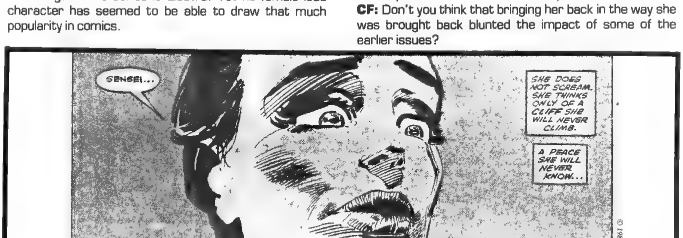
CF: I think that when Bruce Jones was doing the first Ka-Zars just recently, he seemed to be introducing that element.

Miller: Yeah, he did some delightful things with Ka-Zar.

CF: A lot of people seem to like and identify with Electra, but she seems to be a rather sick character.

Miller: Very conflicted, certainly. And very sick. Conflict is what makes the whole game interesting. The entire Daredevil/Electra was essentially a romance. That's what I think made the character succeed. Also the fact that she was attractive and in certain ways admirable. I believe that the conclusion of the series left her in a much better place than one would have expected.

CF: Don't you think that bringing her back in the way she was brought back blunted the impact of some of the earlier issues?



Miller: Not in recent history. Certainly Wonder Woman for a time was a very popular character. I think it has to do with the fact that comics have become more and more boys' territory over the years. Comic book people have generally treated femal characters almost exclusively as either mother figures or sex objects or both. There is an audience out there, I believe, very hungry for female characters who are, of course sexual because hopefully most heroes would be, but also heroic in their own right.

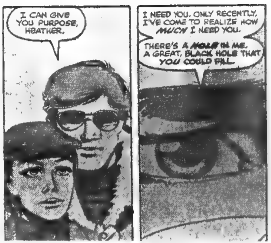
CF: Is Amethyst the type of book that you think would bring back a female audience?

Miller: I haven't read it so I don't know. I don't think that the interest in a female character would entirely come from girls necessarily. There are a lot of male Electra fans out there.

Miller: No, it made sense out of them, it gave them a point. It turned a sequence that could have been depressing into something that was actually optimistic. There is a great, huge predjudice against ressurection in comics, mainly because they've been done so often, so poorly. Ressurection is as eternal a mythic scene as you can find, and comic books are mythology. Saying that we shouldn't do ressurections is as limiting as saying that characters shouldn't fly because they don't in real life. Especially when we're talking about redemption through love, which is what that story was about. I'm sure that you can find many examples of that in opera and mythology.

CF: It's almost literally the rising and the advancing of the spirit.

Miller: Although it was a protracted advancing.


I CAN GIVE YOU PURPOSE, HEATHER...
I NEED YOU. ONLY RECENTLY, I'VE COME TO REALIZE HOW MUCH I NEED YOU.
THERE'S A HOLE IN ME... A GREAT, BLACK HOLE THAT YOU COULD FILL...
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CF: Denny O'Neil mentioned that there might be an Electra mini-series coming up. Is there any plan on your part to work on that?

Miller: There is an Electra project being discussed right now. It wouldn't happen for quite a while and all I can say is that it is being discussed. I can't really talk about it.

CF: Unlike some other people who have left Marvel, it is my impression that you left under fairly good terms.

Miller: Very good terms. I am up there from time to time. Several of my friends work there. There is no bad feeling.

CF: It's nice to hear that for once.

Miller: It was business, that's all.

CF: You got a better offer?

Miller: It was business.

CF: While you were at Marvel did you ever run into the barrier of a house style?

Miller: Not really. Obviously each editor has his own predjudices and his own beliefs, because each editor's job is to make things better. Different people have different ideas of what "better" is. Working with editors, in general, is something of a tug-of-war. Although once I started producing work that wes sucessful, I was encouraged to pursue my own course as much as possible. I couldn't have asked for more encouragement in that way than what I got. I was not told to draw like John Romita or Jack Kirby at any point.

CF: Denny O'Neil is writing the **Daredevils** now. Does he stay in touch with you about it.

Miller: Oh sure, we talk things over, but it's his baby now. I'm eager to see what he's going to do with it. He was such an intricel part of the series when I was doing it that he is much more in touch with what I did on the series than anyone else could be.

CF: Klaus Jansen seems to have worked very closely with you on the series as well.

Miller: Yes, Klaus and I did work very closely. We conferred quite a bit. As the **Daredevil** project continued, he and I continued to work more closely.

CF: How much of the look of the issues while you were there was actually due to Klaus?

Miller: There was a point in the last year of **Daredevil** when I started giving him drawings on letter sized pieces of paper. The rendering and the placement of blacks became his province. Deciding who was responsible for what is very difficult; you get into a lot of grey areas. The stories were mine, the compositions were certainly mine. We're talking about two people working on the art work. It's so pointless to try to figure out who did what. I'd have to have the pages in front of me; I'd have to point to things; and even then all those little leaps in logic that happen between people would be impossible to tell you about.

CF: It seems that since you've left, Klaus has tried to keep the same sort of look to the **Daredevil** series. Do you think he's been successful with it?

Miller: I haven't really seen that much of it. What I saw I though looked very good. He's taking on a big assignment. I admire his courage with it. It's something that I've encouraged him to do right along. I believe that Klaus's imagination and intelligence are such that he should continue to expand as much as possible.

CF: I think he's one of the real underestimated talents in the industry.

Miller: Yes, he certainly is.

CF: Are you under an exclusive arrangement with DC or are you allowed to do work for other publishers?

Miller: I'm under no exclusive arrangement except that I'm under such a schedule right now that I'm pretty much restricted to one project. I have not signed an exclusive agreement and have no intentions of ever doing so.

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
50¢ 177 DEC
BEGINNING SEPT. 12th ON NBC
SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS!
DAREDEVIL
IN HIS STRANGEST ADVENTURE!
YES, WE DID... WE DARED TO PUBLISH THIS, THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS STORY OF THE YEAR!

CF: Do you intend to do any other work other than Ronin?

Miller: Talk to me when I'm a little further into Ronin. Right now Ronin is a very demanding assignment and also a thrilling one to work on. I'm handling so many new problems and finding so many new things and working with what I regard as such a neat story that I wouldn't even want to be bothered with anything else right now.

CF: Do you own the whole concept of the character?

Miller: I can't really go into the contract part of that. It's pretty complicated and we're opening a can of worms by talking about it.

CF: Can you tell us something about the character itself and the millieu that it will be in?

Miller: The Ronin series -- I've been trying to find a way to describe it -- the best way I could describe it is to say that it's a super-hero, science-fiction, samurai drama, urban nightmare, gothic romance. It's quite a complicated series. The concept of the character comes from the name, Ronin the Masterless Samurai. He's a Samurai who was cast-out by whatever lord he worked for or he somehow failed the lord in some way. It's a shameful state for a samurai to find himself in. This is not to indicate that it's a historical story at all. It takes place in fact, in the future. It's New York after the turn of the next century. The Ronin character operates in this very different world than we live in, but he is a samurai character.

CF: How does he become a samurai in future Japan? It seems that Japan has become more Westernized than that.

Miller: And the Western society has become a bit more Easternized. As far as how it all happens, that's really the story and I don't want to give it away.

CF: Is he going to be a mortal man or is he going to have particular powers?

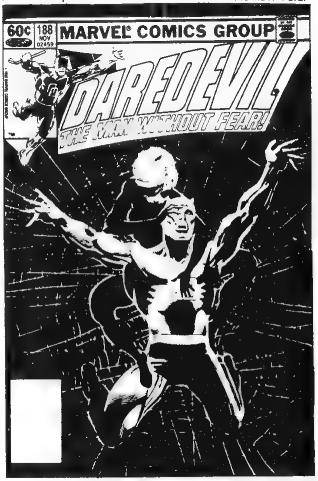
Miller: He has some extraordinary abilities and some abilities that one would associate with a samurai. One of the reasons that the description I gave of the series was so involved and apparently contradictory is that I allowed the story to be whatever it was without thinking of genre. He does qualify as a super-hero and he also qualifies as a martial artist. You would have to read it to understand.

CF: Can you tell us anything more specific about the characters that will be involved? What he'll be doing? About the villains?

Miller: I can tell you that the basic setting of the story is Manhattan Island, sometime around the year 2030, well into the most serious depression of the country's history. Much of the action takes place in a very grim deprived version of Manhattan. It makes **Daredevil** look like a party. The principal characters I would describe as being the Ronin, who I really can't talk about much, and a corporation cop named Casey, the female lead of the story. She is crucial to what goes down; she's a very important character. I'm sure that in several issues of the series she will have the main action. The villain is a transplanted demon from 800 years ago who does all kinds of nasty foul things. The entire series is an unveiling of different plot developments. To give too much away right off the bat would be to negate the whole purpose of the first issue.

CF: What has happened to the rest of the United States? Is it still there and intact?

Miller: There has been no nuclear war. There's been no cataclysm. We're talking about economics collapse and with it, for the rest of the country, all the things one would except. Thisis where the Robert Heinlein refer-



ence comes in. I've worked out my own ideas about the rest of the country, but it's very unlikely that any of it will appear anywhere in the story. America is attempting a recovery. In the Aquarius Complex, which is a new building built in Manhattan to develop new technology, there's a discovery that offers up hope for the future and also offers up the possibility of total cataclysm. As far as where the rest of the country is, it's very depressed; it's very poor; people are starving. Manhattan is one of the grimmest places in the world.

CF: Manhattan can't survive on it's own. Food has to be brought in from outside sources. Are the lines of communication to the outside world still as open?

Miller: Manhattan Island has been abandoned. The Aquarius Complex is an attempt to bring some new money in, but Manhattan Island is a barbaric land.

CF: How does it feed itself?

Miller: All kinds of discussing ways that will be made apparent.

CF: Has this been a world economic collapse or does it just affect the United States?

Miller: It's a world economic collapse. Other countries are recovering faster than the United States. The country that is in the strongest economic situation is Japan.

CF: Is Japan going to be tied into the story or does the action take place only in Manhattan? The name seems to imply that Japan is involved.

Miller: The name really refers to the hero and what the different characters go though. In this world I'm describing, all the characters are in a way ronin. They're all cast outs. They're all disenfranchised. There are several Japanese characters in the story, but almost exclusively, the action takes place in Manhattan. It's a story that happens in New York.

CF: Is this story six issues?

Miller: Six 48-page issues.

CF: Is the series designed to build up and then terminate, or is it built so that it could continue?

Miller: The series has what I can only describe as a very definite ending.

CF: There will be nothing beyond that then.

Miller: There's nothing contemplated right now.

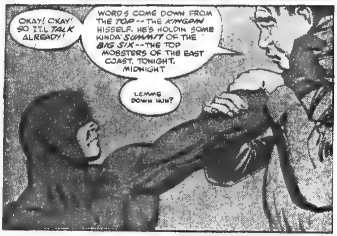
CF: Is it open enough so that there could be?

Miller: Well, something always could be, but there's no plans along those lines. It would be difficult with what I have planned for the finish of the series.

CF: I imagine you have something planned for Frank Miller beyond the 36 week run of Ronin.

Miller: Right now all I've got planned is to work as long as I can and as much as I can. I've spent a lot of time figuring out this project and I'm eager to do it. I've got tons of ideas for other things I could work on, but right now my entire focus is on this. When the time comes, I'll see what I feel like doing then.

CF: One thing you've talked of in other interviews is the concept of a very fleshy, pulpy human within the concrete caverns of a very rectangular city. Is this going to make itself evident in the Ronin series in this starved Manhattan?


OKAY! OKAY! SO IT'L TALK ALREADY!
WORD'S COME DOWN FROM THE TOP--THE YONGAM HISSELF, HE'S HOLDIN SOME KINDA SUMMIT OF THE BIG SIX--THE TOP MONSTERS OF THE EAST COAST, TONIGHT, MIDNIGHT
LEMME DOWN NUH?

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Miller: Almost everything about the Ronin will be different from my previous work. I'm exploring brand new ground. That sort of concept is the very thing that turns me on and gets me very involved, but the overall look of Ronin is much less stark and much more textural. Because of the way it's being printed and the way that it's being covered, I've developed a different way to render it, a different way to approach it. This is getting the finest production that you can get. Consequently everything from the writing to the art to the coloring has to be changed radically to accomodate it. It's as if I've been doing black-and-white TV movies and all of the sudden I'm doing full-color films. It's that radical a difference and for that reason it's that radical a difference in style for me.

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CF: Is this going to be mechanical seperations as most comics are or is this going to be full process.

Miller: Full process.

CF: It should be impressive.

Miller: Lynn Wiley is coloring. I'm very fortunate to have her working on it with me.

CF: What has she done previously?

Miller: She colored last year's **Batman Annual**, she colored my last issue of **Daredevil**, she colored the last issue of **Wolverine**. she is able to do things with color that I don't think anyone else can. She understands the process color and is able to play with it and bring things from it that startle and delight me. She's been involved very closely since the conception of this project. Her work is absolutely critical to the project. I think that generally comic book colorists themselves have not gotten much credit for what they've done. You may recall that a few years back people didn't pay much attention to inkers. Terry Austin and Klaus and a few other people convinced them otherwise. I believe that this project will, with the printing it's getting and the coloring it's getting, do the same thing and people will start noticing comic book colorists.

CF: I think that comic book coloring, because of the poor quality, not of the original work, but of what people actually see, tends to make it a background rather than a foreground.

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Miller: With normal four-color comics printed on that horrible pulp paper we're really talking about black-and-white comics that are tinted with color, because the color is so poor. What we're talking about with Ronin, we're talking about comics that, while still working with blackline art, with essentially cartoon art, as all successful comic books really are, we're talking about painted comics. Lynn is choosing from an unlimited variety of colors, rather than the sixty or so that you see in seperated color.

CF: In other words the color here is going to be an intrical part of the story.

Miller: Absolutely. I can't over-emphasize how important it is.

CF: Is anything going to be done in a special way with the lettering in this book?

Miller: John Costanza is lettering it which makes it special. He's about as good as anybody gets on that end of the job. Incidentally, the panel borders and balloons are all being done by me and you'll find that I'm using them in ways that they haven't been used. Different scenes have different looks, right down to the type of line used on the panel borders.

CF: Since you're working with the text, right down to doing the balloons, are you going to be using the wording as a major element in controlling the piece?

Miller: That's a big chunk of the entire game there. Comic books are meant to be read. Comic books are a form of literature before anything else. I worked very hard on the words; they're very important.

CF: I meant using words for pacing. Some pages are meant to move very quickly so you use very few words there and others are meant to go slowly so you place more words there to slow the reader down. That sort of thing.

Miller: Of course, when a scene relies on dialogue, the dialogue becomes the most important part of it. When I

do a dialogue scene, I tend to lay the words in before I even draw anything because the words are so much more important than anything else. I'm using words in many ways – all in word balloons incidentally; there are no captions or thought balloons in the entire series. I'm trying some of my theories out and seeing what will happen.

CF: That's almost on the level of the television or movie type of style, where you can't read the characters' minds and there are certainly no captions.

Miller: It's making me do a much better job of telling the story. The goal is to create as complete an illusion as possible. To create an illusion you have to create a sense of being there. When I am in a situation with someone, I can't see everything that's going on, I certainly can't read other people's thoughts and there is no overdubbed voice telling me what's going on. I have to correlate that with my brain. I'm asking the readers to do the same thing, to look at the pictures well enough to see what's in them because there won't be any box at the top that tells them.

CF: Is the Ronin character going to be a costumed character?

Miller: He has a costume; it doesn't appear for a while, but he does have a costume.

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CF: Other than his normal clothes?

Miller: Well, he doesn't really have any normal clothes. He doesn't have a skin tight costume if that's what you mean.

CF: And he doesn't take a pair of glasses and put them on and say, "Hi, now I'm in my secret identity."

Miller: No secret identity.

CF: I think the unfortunate part is that it's too early for you to tell me as much as I'm looking for about the series.

Miller: A lot of the things I'm doing really depend on things being revealed as they happen. I wouldn't want to give too much away. That's not my style anyway. I think comic book people tend to talk too much and I'm not going to give anything away that I want to be a surprise.

CF: Do you plan on staying in comics for your career?

Miller: Right now I can't think of anything I'd rather do. My interest is more intense than it's ever been. It's increased every year. I feel that I'm just starting to explore what I want to explore and to learn what I need to learn. I'm a comic artist for the duration as far as things look now.

CF: No animation or anything like that?

Miller: You never know what's going to happen. If I get

I THINK THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS TRYING TO TAKE MY POSITION AWAY FROM ME.
I'M GOING TO FIGHT THEM.
DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD, HEATHER?
IS THAT WISE?
WHY NOT? I'M AN EXECUTIVE NOW.
I'VE BEEN TAKING CLASSES AND EVERYTHING.
I WANT TO SHARE MY LIFE WITH YOU, DARLING.

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bored, I'll move on. Right now, I'm completely exhilarated by this stuff. Especially now, especially working on Ronin.

CF: How much of the Ronin first issue have you completed.

Miller: The first issue is complete. I'm presently inking the second issue.

CF: So that's almost done as well then?

Miller: It will be done in a few weeks, yes.

CF: I don't mean to be antagonistic, but there's just so much that I want to know about.

Miller: There's only so much I can talk about and only so much I want to talk about. I think professionals do that too. One of the reasons why I have refused to talk about business in an interview. First off, I believe that business is something between two parties and it really isn't any of anybody else's business. Second, I believe that many pro-

fessionals have tried to turn business into an area of public combat and that's not where it belongs.

CF: I also think that the professionals have tried to use the fan press and public pressure to get themselves an edge in their negotiations with the companies.

Miller: That's not a very good way to do business or a very effective one.

CF: The reason I asked you about ownership of the Ronin character is that, from what I understand, it is the only character that a creator has been able to own at DC and Marvel has the whole Epic line. I'm curious to know if DC is doing anything to respond to that or not.

Miller: The answer to that would be very long and it's stuff I can't really get into. We're talking about stuff that there's been a lot of talk about. However, I think the companies that don't concede the very important issue are going to find themselves eventually either out of business or producing some of the most banal material available. It's that crucial an issue because the creative people deserve to own their own material and they know it now. It's going to be very difficult to run a business without conceding that.

CF: Joe Staton told me recently that any creative person who has established himself is foolish to work on someone else's properties. He should be pushing his own properties because there is so many benefits to that.

Miller: We're not going to live forever doing the same old characters from the 1960s. Really the entire mythology that's in existance today is nearly 20 years old. Very little of what was created then is going to survive much longer because it's so far removed from present day experience. We need new properties or we just won't have an industry.

CF: Isn't it possible to pump blood back into them like John Byrne has done with the Fantastic Four or like you yourself did with Daredevil?

Miller: I think it is possible. I think that it's something that will be done from time to time. We can revive old ones for a long time, but we need new ones. We need to have the pool of characters increased. We need this generation of artists – I mean, why should this generation of artists not contribute something new? The freelancers, by and large, as well as the companies know that their survival is dependant on new properties. Now we have a generation of artists who are certainly at least as talented as the ones who went before, but they have the ones who went before as an example. I don't think there's anyone out there now who want's to be a – who wants to put his blood into a project and not retain som financial interest in it.

CF: You don't want to end up in poverty twenty years down the road when you stop drawing. And that happens.

Miller: Of course it happens. It's happened a discusting amount of times. If this generation doesn't take that into account, we're a bunch of idiots.

A Letter To THE AVENGERS

Dear Roger [Stern]:

Time and again these past eighteen months I have planned to write **The Avengers** about the contemptible things that were being done to Hank and Jan Pym. My former favorite comic had become the comic I hated. I continued to buy it in hopes that things would change; that Marvel would quit kicking my two favorite comic book characters. In "Final Curtain" and "The Last Farewell" you have done just that, Roger, and I thank you. But your work isn't done yet.

For the past dozen years several Marvel writers have portrayed Dr. Pym as an incompetent nerd, filled with a self-loathing that bordered on psychosis. That consensus portrait is fundamentally wrong, and amazingly mule-headed. Pym is the greatest biochemist alive; if he had done nothing but invent size-reducing gas and learn to communicate with ants, he would stand as one of the supreme figures in human history, a scientist fully equal to Newton, Einstein, and Reed Richards. But Pym didn't stop there. As Ant-Man, Giant-Man, Goliath and Yellowjacket, he has saved countless lives. He has continually inspired those around him to develop their moral and spiritual potential. Several of them, from Janet the dizzy heiress to Scott Lang the ex-con, have gone on to become mature superheroes — with Hank's counselling and generous technical assistance.

It was at his suggestion that the Avengers were founded, and for a time he, Jan, and Clint Barton **were** the Avengers. The group might not exist today if they hadn't stuck together in that rough time.

He created a thinking being, and if Ultron's course has been an evil one, it is because Pym endowed him with the thing that all truly rational creatures must have — free will. Much has been made about his guilt in creating Ultron — in **Avengers 213** Iron man is made to think, "Can he ever be more than a haunted, hollow man drowning in a sea of guilt over the wrongs done by his monstrous creation?" Those are strange thoughts coming from a man who began his career manufacturing weapons for the mass-murder of innocent civilians. Anthony Stark of all

people should know that we can atone for past errors by leading honorable lives. And if Pym failed with Ultron he succeeded in his overall goal: for Ultron gave birth to the Vision and Jocasta — Pym's grandchildren. The good that these two artificial beings have done far outweighs Ultron's evil.

Both in the Marvel Universe and in our universe, many readers of Henry Pym's exploits are leading more moral and idealistic lives than they might otherwise have done, because of Pym's humane example.

Why have so many writers since Stan misunderstood Pym so badly? I've wrestled with that problem for years, talking it over with other Pym admirers, and I think I've finally got an answer.

Stan Lee wrote about heroes with problems. The uniqueness of his approach has sometimes been exaggerated. The characters that John Broome and Gardner Fox were creating at DC during the same period tended slightly more toward the strong and silent mold, but they were just as complex, and equally real. The thing that made Stan's characterizations (and Ditko's, and Kirby's) such milestones in the history of comics was not so much originality, as the love and conviction he brought to them. A clear-sighted observer of human nature, Stan recognized that some people — like Ben Grimm and Peter Parker — kvetch about their problems, coping with anxiety through wise-cracks. He recognized that other people — like Reed Richards and Scott Summers — tend to internalize their problems, working them out with a minimum of complaining. This can sometimes make them edgy — Reed and Scott have both been known to snap at people. But there is nothing inherently **right** or **wrong** about either method. Different solutions work for different temperments.

"...WHEN THE GOVERNMENT ORDERED A CONSIDERABLE SHAKE-UP OF THE AVENGERS ROSTER.
"A SMALLER ROSTER WAS INEVITABLE, OF COURSE. WHAT WITH ALL OUR FRIENDS AND RANGERS ON THE TEAM, HAD BECOME CLOSE TO UNMANAGEABLE!
IN ORDER TO REGAIN YOUR PRIORITY PRIVILEGES, YOU'LL BE REQUIRED TO PARE DOWN YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO A CORE GROUP OF SEVEN.
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When Stan started writing the **Avengers**, he knew what a volatile mixture of beings he was bringing together. There was a semi-sentient green monster; a tough guy with a hammer who spoke Shakespeareian English even though he was a god; a super-tense, sexually promiscuous, billionaire weapons manufacturer who ran around in a suit of armor; and a young woman (perhaps 19) of tremendous but largely unrealized potential. Soon the monster left and was replaced by a "super-soldier" suffering a massive identity crisis over the loss of his teenage partner and over being frozen in a block of ice for eighteen years. Stan realized that in order to hang together the group needed someone different from the others by virtue of his very normality: someone calm, reasonable, rational, and kind, not suffereing from ego problems. Fortunately Stan had such a character ready at hand — Ant-Man; Henry Pym.

He was the viewpoint character with whom readers could identify in this strange assemblage. Writers who say that he was less powerful than Thor, and rarely played the decisive role in winning battles, are missing the point. His value to the group didn't lie in muscle, but in character. Like Ringo Starr during the same years, he was a modest, competent, likeable man in a group of prima donnas; easy to get along with, he made it easier for the others to get along with each other. He was to the Avengers what Ringo was to the Beatles — the flesh and blood; the glue; the backbone. The Vision and the Beast have played a similar role within the group in recent years, but no one has ever done it as effectively as Hank Pym.

Stan Lee's characterizations were so good because — like Twain and Dickens, and Fox, Broome, Gerber and Englehart, he based them on observations of people — many kinds of people, hot personalities and cool ones, in many different situations. Several of Stan's successors, sincerely trying to follow his example, instead ended up writing not from life by from formula. Stan's characters had problems; some of his imitators sim-

plified that to "characterization and problems are the same thing." Every character began kvetching, and where once there had been a rich chorus of human voices, by the late '70s there was a single chord: **angst**. And as for Hank Pym — Hank, who got the job done, and did it well, without whining or tooting his horn; Hank who loved his wife more than life itself; why, Hank just **had** to be a psycho.

This would have been easier to take if DC had continued to offer an alternative. Sadly, DC stopped being DC when Fox and Broome left, and became a bad imitation of Marvel. Ray [the Atom] Palmer, the thoughtful, humorous, believable research scientist-turned-hero, became a posturing whimp full of "snappy patter." Hal Jordan, the unpretentious, cooly confident, quintessential possessor of the Right Stuff, began speaking about himself in the third person ["Green Lantern is gonna win."]

In the two major comic companies today there are hordes of writers shovelling out caricature in place of characterization, as if the human personality was nothing more than an accumulation of neuroses. These writers are tone deaf to anything softer than a shout, or subtler than a punch in the eye. In comics today there is scarecely anyone left who knows how to write about a quietly decent human being.

You are one of the few exceptions, Roger. Your portrayal of Stephen Strange is a fine example of how a comic book character can be both mature and interesting. And now you have rehabilitated the much-maligned Henry Pym. Faced with a storyline that debased and degraded him, you have made him again what I believe Stan intended him to be — wise, dignified, and forgiving, the sanest and strongest of Marvel heroes.

To restore Hank's reputation, dignity, competence, and strength of character is much, but it is not enough — not enough for Hank, and not enough for Jan. They love each other, desperately and passionately; they need each other; and I plead with you to bring them back together.

I am sick of the way Marvel and DC have been systematically destroying long-running male/female relationships for the past dozen years; heartily sick, and morally indignant. Gwen Stacy fell off a building, Dorma died on her wedding day. Iris and Barry Allen decided to have a child, and that evening Iris got shot full of angel dust. Scott Summers and Jean Grey got engaged; the next day Jean committed suicide. Clee took off for another dimension. Hawkwoman has apparently ceased to exist. Aquababy died, and Mera left Aquaman. We havent been treated to the "dramatic Marvel death" of Franklin Richards — yet — but he **has** been demonically possessed, and his father turned him into a vegetable for several months to keep him from destroying the Earth. The list is much longer than that.

The cumulative effect of all these brutal happenings is profoundly anti-family, and it is sick. Thousands of us had our characters shaped, to a significant degree, by Marvel Comics twenty years ago, when we were nine. There was sadness and disappointment in those early stories, but their basic message was idealism, love, and hope. What message are the new Marvels giving to today's nine-year-olds? Don't get romanically involved with anyone, or you'll lose your magic power. Don't have a child, or he'll turn into a world-shattering geek.

I WAS A MINIMAL EMOTIONAL WRECK. HANK ULTRON RETURNED LNGN SECRETLY. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO MUCH TO TIP ME OVER THE EDGE
"UNDER THE FROOTVALE OF ME PSYCHE I WAS MANIPULATED INTO BECOMING THE ANT MAN ALIEN AND DESTROYING MY FELLOW AVENGERS"
IT'S ALMOST FUNNY IN A WAY. I TOOK ON THE AVENGERS SINGLE-HANDED AND NEARLY BEAT THEM. MY FINEST HOUR AS A HERO AND I WASN'T EVEN IN MY RIGHT MIND!
IRON MAN WAS ABLE TO DEVISE A FORM OF ELECTRO-SHOCK THERAPY WHICH UNDID THE DAMAGE TO MY MIND THAT ULTRON HAD DONE — I'M NOTHING ELSE — AND I STARTED PLAYING YELLOWJACKET AGAIN!
I WAS JUST GETTING BACK INTO THE SWING OF THINGS —

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SHE'S BACK! SHE MATERIALIZED RIGHT THROUGH THE CEILING... EASY AS YOU PLEASE!
B-BUT.. SHE JUST LEFT!
ASTOUNDING! HER SPEED MAKES QUICKSILVER'S LOOK LIKE NOTHING!
C.M.: YOU OKAY?
HMM?
WHY...YES, OF COURSE. HOW'D I DO, IRON MAN?
YOU...MADE A COMPLETE CIRCLING OF THE GLOBE IN SOMETHING UNDER TWO SECONDS!!
VERILY, YOUR POWERS ARE UNLIKE ANY OTHERS!
R-THE SUPER-SWIFT MUTANT AVENGER, NOW ON INACTIVE STATUS.

I've argued with two of Marvel's leading writers at comic conventions in regards to their treatment of relationships. Both of them said that: A) Marvel does not have it "in" for relationships; B) It's necessary to destroy male/female relationships because happy relationships are boring. And yet Marvel has always written about **friends**. Ben Grimm and Johnny Storm are friends. Petsy Walker and Brunhilde are friends. Thor and Iron Man are friends, and I don't recall their every speaking a harsh word to one another; but have you ever heard anyone complain that their mutual warmth and camraderie is **boring**? Why does a relationship have to be dull when the people are both friends and lovers?

I think that the reason this keeps happening is that too many of you guys are lazy. It's one thing to write "And they lived happily ever after." It takes imagination, intelligence, observation, and care to show a romantic relationship actually happening onstage, and continuing to happen, to show lovers laughing together, working together, developing problems and **solving them** together. It's so, **so** much easier to push Gwen off a ledge, or have Hank square his shoulders and walk away.

I recognize that the same cruel, dehumanizing nonsense is being palmed off on us by all of the mass-media. But that's no excuse for Marvel doing it. Back in the early '60s Jack Kirby drew crowd scenes of people of different races standing together in friendship, and Jack's pictures helped to make such scenes a reality. Even if there were no happy relationships left in real life — and there are many — you could use your imaginations to show a new generation of young people how such relationships could be achieved. [Some suggested techniques: Tolerance, humor, kindness. Not making a big deal out of each other's failings.]

For those writers whose imaginations still need some assistance, I suggest a reading and viewing list [necessarily a short one, since so few artists today have the guts to state this simple radical truth: that there are men and women who like each other, and make each other happy]. The comedies of William Shakespeare; **The Thin Man**, by Dashiel Hammett — and the movies it inspired; the film **Popeye** — and the comic strips and cartoons that preceded it; the British television series **Good Neighbors**; the novellette "Hurricane Trio," in **A Way Home**, by Theodore Sturgeon; and the adventures of Henry Pym and Janet Van Dyne in a wonderful 1960s comic book, **Tales to Astonish**. The film **Shoot the Moon** shows how people who love each other can sometimes fall apart; and, because they love each other, come together again. Its final frame is of an outstretched hand; its final word of dialogue is — "Faith."

And, in any case — yours is the House of Ideas. You don't have to follow. Like Kirby, you can lead.

Get on the stick, Mr. Stern. You've got a hell of a lot of talent. Use it. Where some writers look at Hank and Jan and see only sources of conflict, Stan saw complimentarity. Janet teased and tickled Henry out of his [rare] bouts of moodiness, drawing out the warm sense of humor that lay close beneath his surface. Henry encouraged Janet to take her talent, courage, and intelligence seriously. Hank taught Jan how to work. Jan taught Hank how to play. As partners, as lovers, but most of all as friends, theirs has been the richest, warmest, and most deeply loving relationship in the history of comic books.

Bring them back together, Roger. Bring them back together for faith. And hope. And love.

Sincerely,
Eric M. Heideman

P.S. to Hank and Jan: Good luck, old friends.

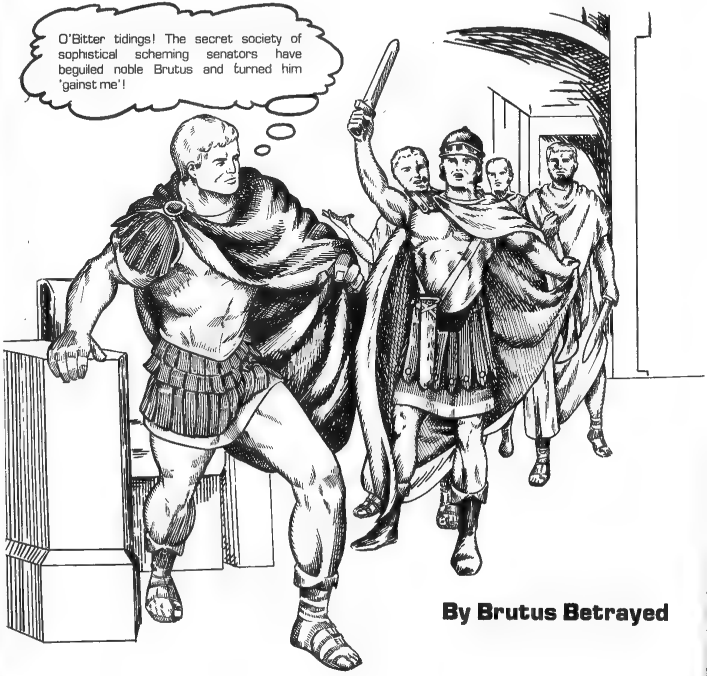
RANDOMIZONE

DID YOU EVER WONDER WHAT THE CLASSICS WOULD HAVE LOOKED LIKE IF THE OLD MASTERS HAD WORKED IN COMICS ?

Ambitious Adventures Of Mighty

CÆSAR

1 shilling

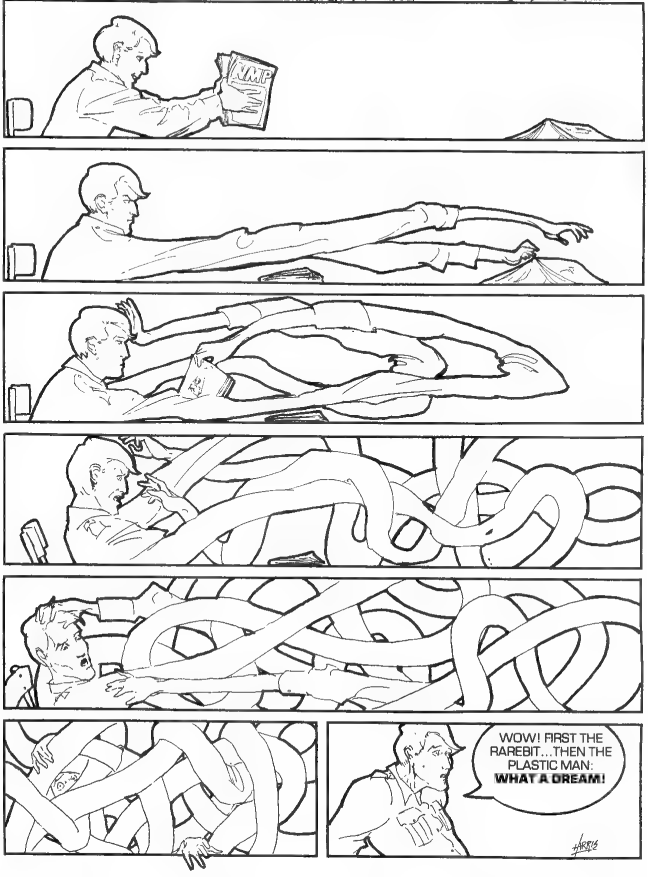

O'Bitter tidings! The secret society of sophistical scheming senators have beguiled noble Brutus and turned him 'gainst me'!

By Brutus Betrayed

Dream of the Rarebit Fiend

created by Winsor McCay

by Mike Harris



How And How Not To Get Letters Published

FIRST CLASS

by Mike Mettler

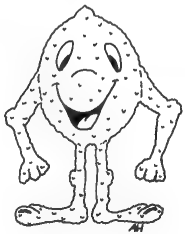
How many times have you seen this:

"Dear Smilin' Steve,

I had not picked up a comic for seven years, until I saw the cover for *Lemonman #15*. The art by super-penciller Bill Hahcke caught my eye; I had to buy it. Obviously, I've been missing something Lemonman has been giving its readers for years.

The latest story featuring the menace of Dr. Gargamel struck me emotionally, and the art was a visual masterpiece. Steve, your script was gripping and hear-rending. I haven't read comics for years, but Lemonman has changed my mind. You've got a reader for life.

Sincerely,
Joe Buyernell"



On the other hand, how many times have you seen this:

"Dear Steve,

Faithfully had I looked toward a better job from the creators on *Lemonman #15*, but alas, I throw my hands up in despair. The dialogue was shallow, the fights too drawn out, and the story was implausible, even for a comic.

I still can not imagine Lemonman squeezing out of the way of the falling piano while being strapped to that bench. You said it took him three minutes to get loose, and it was only seconds before the piano hit. Now the law of gravity states that objects fall at the rate of 32 feet per second. Since Dr. Gargamel clarified last issue that the piano was dropping from a height of 500 feet, it should have squashed Lemonman in about 16 seconds. This was just sloppy.

I'm afraid the art was murky and the panel continuity nonexistent, subtracting from the overall story itself...with this issue, Lemonman has proved that it is resting on the laurels of earlier stereotypes.

Sincerely,
Gary Critichael"

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Chances are, the majority of letters to see print are going to be similar to example one. Although example two brings up a good point to back up discontent, an editor of a letters page will want to avoid printing that type of letter. For an example, see Bill Middleton's letter in *Moonknight #29* where he finds fault after fault in MK #25, while seventeen other letters praised it endlessly. Editor Denny O'Neil probably decided to throw in one letter to off-set the praise, but Middleton's letter embarrasses the page; the points raised are all logical, and it just seemed to appear that Bill was the only reader out of the "Mountains of mail" to spot them.

So how are letters selected for print? How can a writer keep his scruples intact and write a constructive letter and see it in print a few months later? Although unlike letter moguls Mike Sopp, T.M. Maple, and Stu Krull, I do not see ten letters of mine appear each month in numerous titles, I have had enough letters printed to feel I can pass along some helpful hints to those who want to get printed - those who want good letters printed. And I also feel I can tell you how **not** to get letters printed as well.

This article is not planned to be a personal vendetta against editors, but a study of what editors are and

are not looking for in letters. To begin, let's take a few passages from a letter of mine printed in *Green Lantern #157*.

"Well, as it turns out, I wasn't too far off base with my guess to the secret of the Starcycle, revealed in the latest ish,, #153. The solution was apt, and the lesson GL learned was an important one. It almost seems like we are reliving the roots of GL, if Hal [Jordan] is going to discover things about himself and GL's power."

The above is a classic example of the letter writer establishing his grounds. My first sentence identifies the issue I am commenting on, followed with a brief discussion on the story's resolution and then speculation on what I thought the plotlines were aiming towards. Notice that I avoided the use of any color words to describe the story or any lavish praise (such as "visual masterpiece"). The only descriptive color word I used was in the following paragraph, where I stated that Carmine Infantino's artwork on the back-up story was "finely rendered".

The content of my final paragraph is what justifies the printing of my letter and illustrates one rule of how to get printed:

"Did you ever notice how a lot of planets - for example, Krypton, Glirell and Marvel's Zenn-la - are united into one complete race instead of spread apart nationalities like Earth has? If you were out in space, would you be thinking 'I'm from the planet Earth' or 'I'm from New York City'? I wonder."

The above question is not directly related to the story in GL #153, but tied in to general continuity and premise of the story.

To help yourself get into print, bring up a logical question that has not yet been asked, and one that an editor can directly respond to. If you notice the comments after my letter, they are soley concerned with my question, especially since my earlier comments did not warrant a reply.

Don't worry about having letters edited; after all, these guys are pros and should notice syntax errors and delete parts they deem unnecessary.

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I do have a copy of my unedited letter to GL, and the only part they left out was when I noted that Joe Staton had been a bit careless with GL's mask; it was on his face at the end of 152 but vanished mysteriously at the beginning of 153. Here's another tip: don't expect a letter to be printed on the sole basis of spotting errors ["Spiderman's mask was blue in panel 6, page 12 of issue #547; I wanna no-prize!"]. Rather, it will be headed for the trash bin. A letter will see print if you discover serious lapses in continuity or misinterpreted scientific law, one of the most frequent mistakes by any scripter. [Of course a reminder to the kiddies that "Superman may not need measles shots, but young boys and girls do," works also, but hopefully you won't need that approach.]

Heading towards the other end of the spectrum, here's a few bits and pieces from a letter that has probably been burned long ago. The issues at hand were *Moonknight's #21* and *22*, two dissimilar stories if ever there were any [imagine comparing "Julius Caesar" to "The World According to Garp"]. The title of MK #21 was "The Master of Night Earth", co-starring Brother Voodoo. I said that it was "...unreadable, I had to struggle through it. Seems to me this was a Spiderman/Brother Voodoo team-up redrawn for MK. MK's dialogue was pitiful. He whines. Wisecracks. Gripes. That's not Moonknight!" Indeed it wasn't. But that was breaking the rule of having letters printed: out and out criticism and showing dislike. On the subject of #22, which was titled "The Dream Demon", "I would compare #22 to #21 as examples of how and how not to write/draw comics stories."

To compare my letter to ones that were printed, only two letters were printed about #21. Only two. This issue was not well-received, as both writers expressed dislike for the actions of Moonknight, although one did actually praise the story. The story was dismissed by one writer as "an extremely disappointing fill-in story" [it was scripted by regular writer Doug Moench]. Most bypassed it to talk about their ambience toward the better story, "The Dream Demon". Those letters were indeed more favorable and well-constructed. Another lesson to be learned: my letter spent more time on my discontent with #21 than on my enjoyment of #22. This was the exact opposite of what was seen in the lettercol and what the editors are looking for. Let's face it: any letter noting outright dislike of the story will be looking up from the bottom of a trash can. You should emphasize your like of an issue (unless you're being critical, which we'll get to in a minute), but don't hype it ["The latest issue of Fandango surpasses anything every done by Will Eisner, Harvey Kurtzman or even Walt Kelly"]. Still on the subject of unpublished material, here's an example of being overly critical. [I wrote this about *Daredevil #183*]:

I was finally relieved when I heard the 'Angel Dust' story would begin to appear in DD #183. So, after finishing the final chapter of the Elektra trilogy in 182, I waited and waited for 183.

I must say I'm kind of disappointed.

First of all, the cover was the most tasteless and misleading I have seen in a long time. Although the event depicted [the Punisher literally shooting a hole into DD] happened in the story, it was not the highlight of the issue. The main point at hand here is Mary's death due to Angel Dust.

...If you want to get the message across to the children about the dangers of PCP or any other drug,

a cover of DD being shot will not entice people who do not know on the inside to buy it for the Angel Dust sequence."

I think you can see for yourself how overtly displeased I was with the issue. Being overly critical won't win you friends; criticism should be evenly distributed with praise. The serious letter writer should recognize this, and use criticism to his advantage and not sound like a savage.

How can you be printed in a fan favorite which receives tons of mail per issue? I was successful in doing this by finding print in *New Teen Titans #25*. It is no secret that Marv Wolfman and George Perez have struck gold with the Titans.

Teen Titans tends to generate a lot of mail - thinking man's mail. The fan favorite books are cared for deeply, so certainly Joe Fan would prefer to write to the Titans concerning their battle with Darkfire than to Dazzler about her struggle with the Sisterhood of Evil Mutants. Time and time again advice has been given to letter-writers to start writing to a low popularity title and then work their way up to the better titles. This is all well and good for those who just want to get into print for the sake of being printed, but I assume that those reading this would choose quality over vanity. Writing to a best-selling title a writer will tend to compose his best letter. I'm not saying that my letter in TNT #23 was an example of literary genius of the first kind, but I was more compelled to do my best than if I was writing to *Weird War Tales*. What my letter was actually trying to achieve was a two-fold purpose.

One of my objectives was to egg on the editor into speaking about a subject which he is dying to tell the readers of. In this case, the lettercol editor was Marv Wolfman, and the issue I commented on, #21, contained a preview of *Night Force*. So...

"The *Night Force* preview was welcomed...we now know the nucleus of the Force, and I sense an antagonist in the face of Dr. Rabin. Baron Winters is obviously the most mysterious. Donovan Caine has just a touch of Marv's previous character, Blade, from the *Tomb of Dracula* [and when will the comparisons ever end, I wonder], Jack Gold needs time to develop, and Vanessa Van Helsing will be the one to watch closely. Wolfman and Coleman are *the* horror team in comics."

How could Marv turn that down? Here's a clean chance for Marv to give the Night Force, his brand new series, a free plug, and he does. Also, you can begin to detect a certain style emanating from my letters; repitition of certain phrases, sentence structure, and the like. Another rule: a writer needs to be consistent, develop a style and make sense.

From the same letter, here's a passage exemplifying my second objective:

"The scene on page 20 where Brother Blood asked for confessions made me do a double take. The female who saw the 'real' Brother Blood -- Wendy Fletcher -- was the cause. The name is familiar to me because it is the maiden name of one of today's most prolific illustrator's, Elfquest's Wendy [Fletcher] Pini. Nothing intended; just a coincidence, I assume."

Heh heh. The above ploy is known as the subtle hint. I build up to my conclusion and left the answer up in the air: Did Marv intend to use her name or didn't he? Well, he did, "for fun and appreciation of her fine work", and admits it. Thanks, Marv. Incidentally, that was the first letter I ever wrote to the Titans, so don't think it will take you 50 issues to get recognized. But don't expect to strike it rich the first time either. Observe what types of letters are consistently being printed, and pattern yourself after them.

Before I run down some of the rules on how and how not to be printed, let me briefly discuss another aspect of comics: fanzines and alternative press. The editorial policies for these magazines vary radically from the mainstream. These editors look for letters with more content and fluent language; this is where letters absolutely need to look sharp. Overt praise will be overlooked; constructive criticism with resolutions will be noticed. Obviously, the type of letter receiving print in *Elfquest* is not going to be printed in *The Comics Journal*. Observe the pattern of the magazine's policy and you should have no problem. I've been printed in 'zines and alternative mags quite a few times; so it can't be that hard.

Here's a lits of the do's and don't's for letter writers, just in case you fell asleep during this essay:

DO type the damn thing. Not only does it look snappy and impressive, but editors do not have the time or patience to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics.

DO use proper, formal letter writing techniques, and double space.

DO, if you're praising a story, give credit to the creators by name, and use color words when necessary.

DON'T go out of your way with profuse praise by using the time-worn "best story ever", "visual excellence", "heart-rending", and the like.

DO, if you're criticizing a story, offer suggestions for improvement or solutions to problems.

DON'T lambast creators to the point of libel.

DON'T make ludicrous suggestions ["I'd like to see Spidey team-up with the Playboy Bunnies"].

DO offer a plausible question that fits into general continuity and is answerable by an editor.

DON'T worry about having sentences and passages omitted or edited.

DO take the time to proofread and correct obvious errors.

DON'T use Stan Lee-isms or clamor for no-prizes.

DO try to stick to a certain style and flair.

DON'T forget your full address on the actual letter itself; envelopes are instantly tossed for the trash.

DON'T forget the stamp.

Other rules may be found in the body of this article. If you are successful and are printed; great! Let us hear about it! But don't let up. Continue to write more often and to more than one title. This is one way to prepare yourself for ... the big time.

NEW AND IMPROVED?

A REVIEW OF RED SONYA

by Deby Dunn

Though I can't speak for anyone else, I personally had no warning of the recent comics revival of the fantasy heroine Red Sonja. To some people Spokane, Washington is the boonies, so we sometimes suffer a dearth of advance publicity. The first I knew of Red Sonja's return was when my local comics dealer innocently asked, "Have you seen the new **Red Sonja** yet?"

"The What?" I demanded. And he handed me a copy.

My first reaction upon seeing Red Sonja's name was wild joy, immediately tempered by scepticism. The cover wasn't by Frank Thorne. Instantly I had my doubts. But I bought the comic on the principle of the thing, and took it home for a thorough analysis.

Yes, for analysis. I am a prose writer, a literature major, and a lifelong disciple of the English language. I would like to flatter myself that I am something of a picky reader, and not easily satisfied.

In considering this comic I have tried to be at once partial and impartial. Partial, because Red Sonja has long been a favorite character of mine. I tend toward enthusiasm over almost anything she does. At the same time, I am inclined to turn a particularly critical eye upon all of her comics appearances. I expect the best from

(and for) her. Impartial because it really would not be fair to judge the new **Red Sonja** by the achievements of the old book. There will be others working on this one, with new ideas of Sonja's destiny. I have honestly tried to judge this new series upon its own merits.

I'm afraid I am far from satisfied with what I see.

Red Sonja has been "improved." I was not aware of any need for her to be "improved." Now, granted, not everyone in the world was as taken with Red Sonja as I. My best friend and I used to have long arguments about her. However, you must admit that any comic character who provokes enough feeling for a serious philosophical debate - not to mention her own Sonjacons - must have been doing something right.

So, Red Sonja has been "improved" with new art, new plotting, and even a new costume. I personally question whether so many changes were called for, and whether they have been healthy for the character.

Costume changes can be the bane of comic characters. I have mixed feelings about this one. Its no secret that Sonja's old costume was designed to appeal to the lusty tastes of male readers. It always seemed a bit excessive to me, particularly since it had absolutely **no** value as armor. To theorize about Sonja's magical prowess is all very well and good, but let's face it: swordsmanship alone, no matter how exceptional, is not enough to keep a person from harm 100% of the time. The odds **will** turn, and when they do you need armor!

On the other hand, Red Sonja's costume was part of what made her what she was. It was recognizable, all the more because it became a point of debate. I have my doubts about the wisdom of changing Sonja's costume, just as another would question the sanity of a person who suggested changing Captain America's. For one thing, there is a growing series of novels in paperback which refer to the old costume quite specifically. What are the authors, Tierney and Smith, supposed to do now -- change her costume midpage?

This said, I must confess that I do like the new costume. The color, dark blue, suits Sonja's brooding personality better than a winking coin/mail. While it still does not cover her completely (those male readers are still making their presence felt, it would seem) the new costume at least is of honest cloth. It makes no pretense to be armor, protects her at least as well as the old one did (against things like sunburn, it may well serve her better) and should certainly be attractive enough to satisfy all of the droolers out there in the readership.

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Unfortunately, this is about the best thing I can say for the new **Red Sonja**. Fond though I may be of Sonja herself, I cannot overlook the many inadequacies of the current comic. To take things in order:

The artwork is nowhere near as good as it should be. Yes, I know, a lot of people never enjoyed Frank Thorne's artwork as much as I did, back in the good old days. But to me, Thorne's artwork on the first **Red Sonja** series was a cornerstone of the book's success. Though idiosyncratic, it had dynamic vitality, a unique style, and above all expressed the artist's passionate commitment to the subject and story he depicted. Frank Thorne cared about what he was drawing. It showed. The readers responded to the character because she was so intensely portrayed. Thorne's artwork was vital to the success of **Red Sonja**.

In that respect there is no comparison with the artwork of the new **Red Sonja**. Both style and presentation are simply inferior. One problem is that there is no single artist working on the comic. There were four artists on the first issue, and two on the second. How can you expect four artists to produce a coherent and unified look for a comic? Yet this very focus and sense of purpose are absolutely necessary to **Red Sonja** -- or to any comic book, for that matter. Without them, she just kind of lies there on the page and looks at you.

Of all the artists who have worked on **Red Sonja** to this point, only one seems to have any sense at all of Sonja herself. Whichever one he or she is, his or her work is not enough to salvage the hastily-put-together work of the others. The final splash (no pun intended) of **Red Sonja** #1 has got to be the worst picture of Sonja I have ever seen.

The unfortunately low quality of the artwork has a crippling effect upon the quality of the book as a whole. Perhaps the artists fail to appreciate that they are drawing a legend, and that the faithful readers like me will **care** about the appearance of this book.

Fortunately, the scripter of **Red Sonja** has not been changed. Good old Roy Thomas is still with Sonja after all these years. And this is the breakdown that I really cannot fathom. Thomas has worked with Red Sonja for a very long time. It was he who essentially created her out of an incidental character from a pulp story. He has never been shy of saying how proud he is of Sonja's success. How, then, does he come to allow such an inferior vehicle for her? Somewhere along the line Thomas seems to have yielded his authority over the destiny of the character. Oh, he does script the book. The words are his, and they are as good as they ever were. But somehow he's got himself stuck putting the flowing verse into the mouths of imbiceles and shadows. He isn't doing the plotting any more.

You certainly can tell.

The new plotter is Christy Marx. Personally I have never heard of the lady. I don't know what experience she has in writing, but I'm afraid that I don't have much praise for her ability. I don't know what it is that Marvel has

about assigning women writers and artists to books that feature female characters. They must be trying to impress someone, because they always make such a point of it. Well, I think it's stupid. I would much rather have my favorite characters created by men who know what they're doing (like Thomas) than by neophytes who happen to be women.

Without a doubt **Red Sonja's** worst problem is in the plotting – and the plotting problems are multiple. The story starts in the middle. Its beginning is related through synopsis that clutters up the whole first page and still fails to convince. Had I been writing it, I would have started at the beginning, showing the Chosen, Sonja's visit, and their destruction in such a way as would make these events real to the readers. As it is we are simply dropped into the middle of the story, without warning or preparation. We don't really know what is going on, and we aren't sure whether to accept it or not.

The second problem is that Marx tried to pack too much matter into the first issue. It all moves too quickly to be accepted. Most of this is to introduce the character Zora and is very poorly conceived. The plot devices are stupid, the incidental characters are stereotyped, the actions generally implausible. Now one would ever mistake a vicious stallion for a gentle mare, especially not when its owner calls it "Mad-eyes." No one could possibly break said vicious stallion to ride in the space of a single panel, and then ride off on it without payment. In the kind of society the comic is supposed to depict, a horse is a very valuable animal. In the Old West, men were hung for stealing them. Further, theft has never been in Sonja's character before. Nor was she ever shown in the company of cutpurses and sots. How does it come about that she is able to recognize a sleeping drunkard by his snore, and hail him as an old friend?

The storylines are as poor as the plot devices, lackluster sword-and-sorcery without even an imaginative demon or monster to liven things up. Too much time is spent in bars and back alleys, and not enough in deeds. Nor is the role of the Red Goddess

ever made clear. It is scarcely touched upon in the unwieldy synopsis. Vague and confusing tidbits can be garnered from character conversation. How can this goddess (or is it a god?) be meaningful in a cataclysmic ending, when its attributes have never been set forth clearly?

The ending of #2 is frankly impossible. Does Marx really expect us to believe that Red Sonja could save the life of a little girl who will grow up to become the pirate Valeria, when Valeria herself came and went from **Conan the Barbarian** approximately 15 years ago, real time? How does that relate Red Sonja's age to Conan's? Is she supposed to be fifteen years older than the Cimmerian? She certainly doesn't look it. If anything, Sonja is depicted as slightly younger than Conan.

It's a cute trick, but it does not pass muster.

Then there's Zora. This character was one of the big mistakes made in "improving" **Red Sonja**. Presented as an accomplished fact, we know nothing of her. It would have been much better if we had been introduced to her as Sonja was. We would have had time, and Sonja's observations, to help us form an opinion.

I've always thought that a sidekick might be useful in **Red Sonja**. It would be good for her, to have a female friend that she could talk to – not another sword-woman, but perhaps a woman with magical powers that would complement Sonja's swordsmanship, but with a personality to match Sonja's own. It could be helpful for Sonja herself.

Zora is not what I had in mind.

To begin with, Zora is presented as an accomplished fact. We have to have a considerable number of flashbacks to justify her presence, and yet we never actually see how Sonja came to acquire her company. Zora's biography becomes an annoyance rather than an explanation. Besides, she seems to be a frivolous character. There she goes, larking along, blundering into the most idiodic situations, flirting wantonly with men of obviously unsavory character, demanding Red Sonja's protection when she ap-

parently has done nothing to deserve it. Worse, she teases Sonja spitefully about her oath of chastity, and then expects Sonja to look after her with the care of the sister we never had a shred of proof she was. And never, ever does she listen to what Sonja tells her. Never mind that Zora was raised in a cavern and knows nothing of the world. Telling her what to do will only assure that she'll do the opposite.

Zora did nothing for the comic. Her lack of value was reflected in an early demise, and I don't expect that anyone really cared. Usually I have some sympathy for characters who die. But Zora is gone, and not a moment too soon. She never belonged in **Red Sonja**.

. I really wish that Christie Marx had started by following the plots of the four Sonja novels. They are all of very hight quality, and are true to the Thorne-Thomas character. At least Marx should read them. She might then begin to have an inkling of what she is supposed to be doing.

Out of all this, what most bothers me is that even Red Sonja is no longer the same. Gone is her bold and fearless spirit, her courage in facing the unknown, the wit she displayed in a pinch, the brooding intensity with which she experienced life. No longer does she raise her sword in fierce indignation against any thing or any person which offends her sense of decency. No longer does she wander the unmapped regions of fantasyland, servant to her own conscience and whim. Now, Red Sonja's sword is sold to the bearer of the brightest gold. Sonja herself is laden with useless burdens, like Zora, which cramp her style and clip the wings of her soul.

The original Red Sonja was an important character to me. She was an exciting artistic creation, whom I was attached to emotionally and philosophically. I percieved an analogy between Sonja and many American women of our time. Like us, she was discovering that so-called "liberation" is incalculably more difficult than it seems from a distance. Sometimes that absolute independance our hearts throbbed for is purchased at

excrucieting cost. Sometimes the decisions we make in moments of extreme emotion are later, to our humiliation, found to be unlivable. Red Sonja was inextricably bound to singleness, tied by an oath from which she never will be released. Like many of her female readers, gloriously free and yet seemingly trapped into isolation from the rest of the human race, she wondered just what it was that she had exchanged for her freedom and her sword. She, and the readers, had barely begun to explore these inner horizons when Thorne left **Red Sonja**. And then she was cancelled.

In the "improved" **Red Sonja** nothing is left of this philosophical depth except for Zora's cruel needling. It irks me. There were dimensions to be explored in **Red Sonja**, and explored as only a comic book could. No creation of such complexity and potential deserves to be stunted into the empty role of a two-bit amazon bodyguard.

I don't know why **Red Sonja** was revived at this time. Vague rumors have filtered down to me, that some kind of motion picture may be in the works. That I'll believe when I see it — and I don't know if I'll be able to force myself to see it. Maybe Marvel is trying to cash in on Sonja's former popularity, figuring that the fans will buy anything if it has her name on it. They may be in for a surprise.

Whatever the reasons, the new **Red Sonja** fundamentally does not work. The effort seems to be cheap and hasty. The artists are not interacting with the scripter; the plotter seems not to know what she is doing. Gone is that euphoric sense of purpose, of following something larger than a mere comic book character. **Red Sonja** now has no more cohesion that the average photo album. Finally, the book fails because someone, somewhere along the line, fails to value Red Sonja.

I will still buy **Red Sonja**. I am a stubborn reader, and foolishly loyal to Sonja. But I'm holding my breath, waiting for her to be cancelled. I would rather not see Sonja in print, than to see her like this.

MIKE KALUTA INTERVIEWED

This interview should have a beard and very long, white hair. It started out as an interview conducted by the editor Richard Howell designed to appear in Artform, *a proposed NMP title which never appeared, and was then typeset to appear in* Comic Fandom's Forum, *a magazine which now has a somewhat erratic schedule. Since the interview is as important as it obviously is since it features one of the most highly recognized artistic talents to work in the comic book medium in which he discusses his techniques and working habits, we felt that it should see print without any further delay. Therefore it appears here in its original form. "CFF's and all.*

CFF: The thing that we want to find out about is the New Romantic Movement.

KALUTA: O.K. The New Romantic Movement is...actually, there are very few people moving in it. But the ones who are, are Barry Windsor-Smith, Robert Gould, Jeff Jones (kind of a half splinter member), and Eric Kimball, who all three of the other fellows are upset at now because he is going off on his own. There's a lot of New Romantic Art being done and the people who are doing it don't know they're doing it, people who are doing it for effects. The portfolio called "New Romantic Art", none of it's New Romantic Art, it's old kind of flashy illustration. It was just an illustration and Norman Nizen who thought up the name, decided he was going to use it for Barry.

I'm a decadent, a New Romantic Decadent. There's something about Romantic that's a bit sweet. Even Barry's a decadent. I think Jeff is the most romantic of them all. It's New Romantic because it's based on the thing that the artists are going through today, although it's done in an anachronistic style.

New Romantic. New Romantic Brotherhood. NERBS. That was Jeff, Barry, Robert Gould, and Eric Kimball.

CFF: Well, I was wondering just how deep the movement was, whether it was just four people deep or what.

KALUTA: There was...uh, actually that was a part of the arguments. There was about two months of really solid deepness. They used to meet all the time discussing tenets. It seemed like each got mad at the other because they all had their own idea of what the movement should be. It's the way all brotherhoods start. I don't know what it actually is anymore. You'll notice a few of Jeff's pictures, a few of Eric's pictures, a few of Robert Gould's pictures have "NRB" on them. It's at least a bit of trivia,

if not a [something] movement.

I think that one of the reasons that the name came up is that the guys at the Studio and a number of other people are looking for a name to call what we do, which is doing commercial art with soul, but it's really felt inside. It's a personal statement, the fact that it's, well, it's so pretty or it appeals to a larger audience which is not what modern art is doing today. You can't understand it. It's in between fine personal art and commercial art. They haven't come up with a name for it yet. They have no idea what it is. Barry refuses to be called an illustrator. I say I'm an illustrator.

CFF: So, you're not really a member of any particular movement in general.

KALUTA: In a movement, you have leaders and followers and I don't want to be a follower; because I don't want anybody to tell me that perhaps I should do thus and so, instead of what I'm doing. And I don't want to be a leader because I don't want to be telling people, "Hey, you're not following the tenets of the Brotherhood." That doesn't appeal to me. I like entertaining. I like pictures, I like making stories. That one, the director, at the TV studio, she came out and she asked me about one of Berni's pictures and I explained who it was. She said, "I was wondering about that, I was making up all these stories."

You can do a picture that's self-explanatory, like a Boris cover or something like I do. I like a picture that, without being pedantic, leaves avenues that lead the imagination on. A lot of people don't care even if it's done by a human being. It's just "Oh, what's this all about?" and make up their stories. They're entertained: it just goes on. It might become a part of their life as far as they know. You get the picture? That's what it's all about.

CFF: Have you ever worked in any other artistic endeavor besides drawing and painting? Do you ever do any writing or anything like that?

KALUTA: Yeah. I wrote my section to **The Studio**. I've written some small fairy tales, nothing really to brag about. They didn't have a lot of depth, levels. I'm not a writer. I entertain. Situation like this...I write dialogues or a monologue for myself to get going. It's not a studied art.

CFF: I just thought that you might have some interest in that because you're obviously so interested in storytelling.

KALUTA: When I start honing my writing, I realize it's all "and" and "the", "and" and "the" "then" "now", "and" and "the" with a lot of cliches which, of course, all great writing is, cliches, but it's done so well.

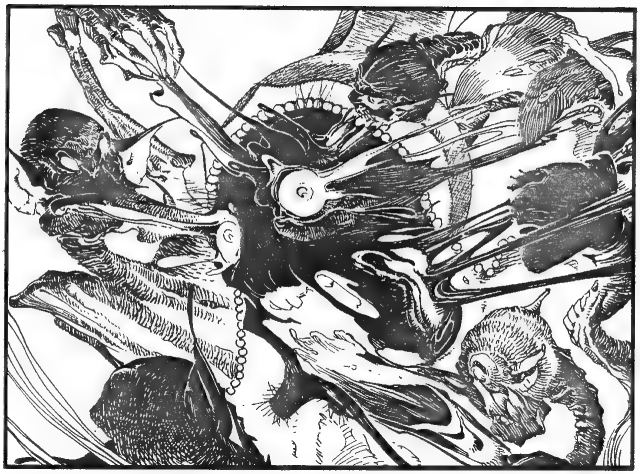
CFF: Do you ever write something to begin the story idea for painting?

KALUTA: I may. One of the fairy tales I wrote, I've always wanted to illustrate. Since I wrote the story, I don't see that I should do the drawings. And I've thought of writing up the story based on "The Fate of Dollies Lost in Dreams." You know, the bed flying through the air, with the doll...because there are at least two more pictures in that series that I'm working on. But if I write a story, what do I sell it to somebody to make some money? Well, yeah, but that's not the answer that I have in mind. The end I have in mind is two more picutres that might relate to that dream. A few of the ones that always bothered me, that I'd love for people to take from a drawing, that would give people the same kind of feeling. That will take some work.

CFF: What are the origins of The Studio? The Studio, I take it, is an economic arrangement of shared working facilities.

KALUTA: Yeah. The origin was that Barry wanted to get together with a bunch of people because he always has to spend time alone and he had no room in his apartment for the kinds of works he wanted to do. He talked to me and I didn't want to have anything to do with it because I couldn't afford it and because I didn't want to work with anybody around me. See, I work alone and I goof off when I want to and I don't have anyone to bother or anyone to bother me. He got together with Bernie and they went out looking, along with Jeff. They finally found this studio and then they begged and pleaded, they cajoled me to, you know, "this great space." They'd already painted it. So I said yeah. And that was the beginning.

And everything was divided equally. We actually got along very well, until **The Studio** book came along. Then we had to find immediately because people started to ask, "What holds you guys together? What's the joining link?" They wanted something to pin stories on. And there wasn't anything. There was, but it was real tenuous. We could see it and feel it, but we couldn't describe it. They wanted it described. Also, to find out who we were. That's one thing I don't mess around with. So, hence my section reads like it does. I tell who I am, but I don't. Because we did such introspection at the time, we became real sensitive, and sparks were flying. No one dared tell anyone what they thought because they knew that they were thinking really heavy about themselves. Only if someone asked, "What do you think of this? Do you think I have certain qualities?" Then someone would venture their opinion which would call for an open house and everybody ventured an opinion on said



subject.

You know the Studio's closed.

CFF: No, I didn't realize that.

KALUTA: Yeah. Right about when the book was first coming on the stands, the lease was up and we all moved to different places. Now it's a studio of the mind.

CFF: Are you still in contact with each other?

KALUTA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Barry lives about twenty blocks from me and Jeff and Bernie live within six miles of each other upstate, which is about a two hour drive.

CFF: So The Studio has become another label similar to New Romantic Movement.

KALUTA: Yeah, except that The Studio actually had existed, and in the book **The Studio** itself we couldn't pull all the essence of what the Studio was, but I don't know, it's photographed someplace in there. What the Studio will become is what, depending on where the book goes, sales and popular acceptance, the Studio will become whatever people thought it was, like a picture. That is like a part of me conceptual art. I get a grin out of it; Alice Allen said, "Gee, I wish you'd kept it a couple more months and we could have had a party up there and filmed up there and had meetings up there. Do you think you could reconstruct it?" Lady, puh-lease.

It was always changing. It was :n metamorphosis. Since everything related to everything in the physical space, when one piece was moved, everything shifted. So if you had one of those cameras that takes a picture every day like they use for flowers and things to watch them bloom fast, it would be incredible to watch this place just shift.

CFF: Whose idea was it to do a book about it?

KALUTA: Well, we were actually going to do a newsletter because we knew a lot of people from college, people wanted to know about whatwe were doing. And we had to come up with a name. Boy, we had these lists. Hilarious. We put big pieces of craft paper inside the darkroom and we started writing titles on them. Our girlfriends would come by and write titles. We had everything. Bernie wanted it to be "Monkey Pie." Barry went for "Winkle." I liked "Monkey Pie", but my favorite for the newsletter title was: "Why I No Longer Draw. (A) The Shadow, (B) Idyl, (C) Swamp Thing, (D) Conan." Another was "The Truth About Stan Lee." And one of them that we did had all the logotypes from each of the comics we'd done: "The Shadow of Conan Gazing at his Idyl Thing in the Swamp" or something like that. But we came up with "The Bastard King." Barry loved it because the bastard doesn't generally make it to the throne, so the Bastard King means, "Blood Will Out."

CFF: That sounds like another story.

KALUTA: Yeah. Yeah. We all got drunk one night and the name came up. We were in Seventh Heaven because we all agreed on it. We went back to the studio where the girls were waiting. We came up and said we had the title. So they all said: "Really? Really? What?" So we

said "The Bastard King." They said: "What?" It just didn't hit them.

Anyway, needless to say, we never got into it because the production...It was going to be a sheet like this and then folded over. So, nothing happened. And then Alexander Moseley and Martyn Dean were traveling around the country looking for new artists for Dragon's Dream. There were Scoso and Kelly and Mouse from the West Coast, Syd Mead, and Corbett, other places. All along the way, they kept seeing bits and pieces of our work, Jeff's work and Barry's. So they showed up in New York and came up to the Studio, not realizing that we were altogether in one place, they had called Bernie's place. They called and said they were going to come by. They came in and looked around and said: "God, it's incredible."

And they wanted to do books on all of us, but to get 160 pages we would have all had to pad the hell out of the book. So the idea came up, I don't know who said it, "Why don't we all do a book together?" That's when the screaming starts. Because everything had to balanced. But it's not balanced. We're all superegos; no, that's not the term. We all have fully developed egos. And we had to shift and balance so that the book came across as a book about four people, not about one of us. I worry since I'm the only one who is doing any of this promotional work that the book will become known as "Michael Kaluta and the Supremes."

Seeking this balance was really the hardest part. Saying, "Should I put this piece in? Does it go with the theme of the book?" And laying the work out. We laid it out ourselves, sent it to them. They relaid it out. We found out about it and we went over there; thought it looked terrible, so we worked that back and forth. They had a guy from **Newsweek** writing up the text. We could have written it up ourselves. This guy interviewed us. Everybody poured his heart out and he wrote these four sections and you wouldn't know us. It wasn't us. He wrote about all the women. Women? You know, we each had girlfriends at the time; he wrote about all the women coming in and checking us out and stuff. He has a personal...he laid it on all of us. We read it and said, "no". So we fired him. Actually, we had hired him too. But Dragon had to pay him one installment anyway.

We realized that if he can't do it, we sure can. For about two weeks we sat by ourselves and wrote our sections and then rewrote and rewrote them and put them in third person. Then we met the day before we had to get them out for our deadline, to review each other's; "take this out," "change this," "plug this in" and then we sent them off. And about six months later, Dragon's Dream edited them all. And round and round. And no work was being done. It was just all work on **The Studio**, deciding what color to put behind what picture, and how this was going to work and layout.

CFF: I just noticed that Barry's name seems to come up fairly frequently. Is he kind of a dominant personality?

KALUTA: You know, if you want to relate it to something, relate it to the Beatles, at the end of the Beatles. Did you see "Let It Be"? Do you remember McCartney? I'm Lennon, Bernie is Ringo, and Jeff is George Harrison. That's it. Barry has an English accent. It makes him like a focal point.

CFF: How did the four of you get together?

KALUTA: Bernie, Jeff, and I met each other in '67 at a convention. Jeff had just won first prize for amateur art. No, no. Jeff had won the last year. He gave the award to Bernie. I was there because I was working for **Spafa** magazine. That was the time we all met Frank Frazetta. We were floored and flabbergasted. We met Roy Krenkel at the same time. Harper amazed him by knowing all these old illustrators that only Roy Krenkel thought he knew. Anyway, Bernie and I became friends and Bernie and Jeff became friends. I moved to New York in '69, and I used to room with Bernie. Around Thanksgiving, we moved from the little place we were staying to Jeff's building. We had a place the same size as Jeff's, but he had his daughter. For a while there, the three of us were working together and every once in a while we would bump into Barry. Barry had been in the States for a couple years by that time. He was living in Brooklyn. And he was waking up in the morning, and going to his work and his girlfriend would give him a sandwich at lunchtime and he worked until he had to go to

From the story Starstruck "Mumbo Jumbo"

sleep. That was the way he worked. That was the way Conan got done. So he was not socializing. I met him a few places. The Detroit convention, '75.

We were two guests of honor so we were thrown together. It was so boring. So we both got drunk every night and, waiting for the airplane, we started talking about flying saucers, childhood experiences, and everything like that. We got to know each other really well. From that point on, we were friends, Barry and I. And Barry had talked to Bernie and Jeff, but since I wasn't interested in getting together in a studio, Barry approached Bernie. Bernie was all for it. He really pushed for it. All in all, it's...I know that Barry felt like Odd Man Out and that's another reason his name comes up. Bernie, Jeff, and I had already gone through the whole thing...when you don't have enough ideas for yourself. You know, when you haven't produced a whole lot of work, you see something you might have mentioned to somebody turn up on a canvas. You say, "I had that", because you don't think you have enough going on upstairs to go on. Ideas are free to plunder. Well, we had all gone through that. Bernie couldn't...it's impossible for Bernie to insult me, or for me to insult Bernie. The same was true for Jeff or any of the three of us.

But Barry was a New Boy on the Block. And he didn't know about Jeff's moodiness and what it meant. That it was introspection, it wasn't that he was upset with something or the fact that Bernie could be so removed, like if we were here and he wouldn't be here; he's just off somewhere, thinking about something, and you could actually be talking to him and you wouldn't know it.

This all threw Barry for a loop. He had never been around a lot of people, especially artists that had an equal stake in what they were doing. He used to work with Charles Waites, the brush fellow, and Ralph Stedman in commercial situations, where money was the object, time was the object, but the Studio was not that kind of thing. You see, it was just a kind of expanding esthetics, a completely different scene. Everything was really personal and it got more personal...but it leveled out.

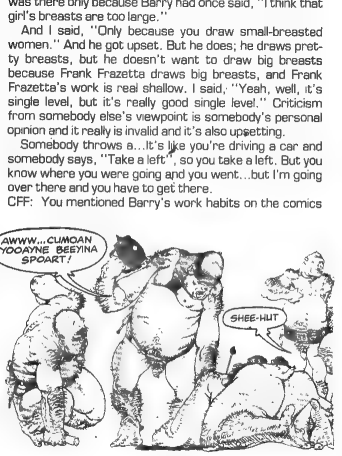
CFF: Was there a lot of interaction in terms of things like art criticism?

KALUTA: Not as much as Barry wanted, but the problem with criticizing work is, in the situation of The Studio, that all the guys' work is fully developed. The only real criticism you can give to a piece is "What were you trying for?" The artist tells you and you say, "Well, perhaps if that was a cooler color it might become more melancholy" or "Perhaps that arm is wrong" and things like that. But Barry, having his pre-Raphaelite and neo-classical ideas, and Jeff having his Whistler and his personal crazy ideas like that Idyll stuff that still sits in the back of his mind, and Bernie with a complete lack of care for anything that's real—a table didn't have to be a real table, as long as it looks good—and my...whatever-it-is, whimsy, the stuff that I put in mine. I wouldn't want Barry telling me that I shouldn't have a girl yawning in a picture ["I Don't Know What You Want To Do"]. Barry was incensed at it. It was a beautiful picture except for the girl with the big breasts. The girl with the big breasts was there only because Barry had once said, "I think that girl's breasts are too large."

And I said, "Only because you draw small-breasted women." And he got upset. But he does; he draws pretty breasts, but he doesn't want to draw big breasts because Frank Frazetta draws big breasts, and Frank Frazetta's work is real shallow. I said, "Yeah, well, it's single level, but it's really good single level." Criticism from somebody else's viewpoint is somebody's personal opinion and it really is invalid and it's also upsetting.

Somebody throws a...It's like you're driving a car and somebody says, "Take a left", so you take a left. But you know where you were going and you went...but I'm going over there and you have to get there.

CFF: You mentioned Barry's work habits on the comics



a little while ago. Can you tell us a little bit about the way you work?

KALUTA: I goof off until it's due and then I start. That's true. Actually, work habits...the book's important here, the sketchbooks. That's where most of the ideas are formed. In between coffees or sitting in a bar watching somebody, I'll be sketching them, but something will pop into my mind. The sketch will go down. Then later on that sketch will come back to my memory while I'm doing something else. The two things will fit together. Now I've recognized the process, I'll say, "well, maybe there's a picture hiding in here", something that will please me, not what will please them, what will they expect, something that maybe would interest me. And I'll start keeping it in a special place in my head where I can enjoy it. I'll watch in on it now and then to see how it's growing, how it's changing. Until it becomes something that affects me personally. Then I start considering it as a piece. This kind of process wouldn't relate to a thing like "The Twinklin of an Eye" because that was originally for a Marvel cover, a genre piece. It does go for "Why Doesn't She Sleep At Night" or "Wedding Dress", or a number of other of those things. It wouldn't go for the illustrations from "The Sword of Sherazar" because it's an illustrative job. The thinking in those things is from something that Frank Frazetta had said. I always thought of a different way of doing this. Everyone's always seen and I think Frank's genius is that he can do that and everybody thinks they've seen it and they say, "Ah, that's the way it is."

He wouldn't be famous but for the fact that he put a picture on a paperback and it sold, not just to fans but to people and their parents. Somehow it appealed to something underneath the skin. And apparently, it's easy to tap because Boris is not doing any imaginative work, but he's selling like hotcakes because of that something, but that's commercial art, whereas Frazetta goes a little beyond that commerciality.

CFF: You've worked in practically every single avenue for an illustrative artist...

KALUTA: I haven't done matchbook covers.

CFF: But you've done comics, you've done book illustrations...

KALUTA: Two album covers...

CFF: Posters, portfolio designs, practically the whole gamut. What do you prefer doing?

KALUTA: Just drawing. I prefer working in my sketchbooks. The posters were a real boon because all of the sudden somebody wanted to print a big picture. And I could just draw a big picture and have fun. It was not like drawing a little panel. You know, somewhere in The Shadow I would have "my panel" and that's the one that I would draw so that it really shined. Every once in a while I got freaked out by money in New York, you know, that's the way it is [lowers voice] "moneymoneymoneymoney" You hear it in everything. So I said, "Okay, I know what I'll do. I'll hack out a couple of jobs. I know all the gimmicks now." I couldn't do it. I couldn't even draw a face. All of the sudden it took three hours to draw the faces. "I can't do it. I still got the rest of it to do." It takes only three hours to do something I really want to do. I don't want to do this story. So I call up and say, "I'm sorry I can't do it." And I go hungry. I'm a prima donna.

CFF: But you specifically asked to do most of the "Timewarp" covers.

KALUTA: I demanded that I do all of them.

CFF: Why did you want to do something like that? True, it's not a comicbook, it's a comic book cover.

KALUTA: Because of the Famous Funnies covers by Frazetta. They so inspired me when I was first drawing because it's the only scientific comic book bout, as far as I know, and also because I get to draw my ideas and they draw the stories around them. You must have noticed that most of those things are kind of 50s, not 70s. I am waiting for the letters to start coming from these kids. All they know is Star Wars. "What are these people running around in these blue jeans for?" "Those are not blue jeans. Those are riding pants."

CFF: And the bug-eyed, creepy crawling tentacled monsters.

KALUTA: Yes. There's three more I've already drawn, actually four more, that are coming out, that are more of the same, even better so. A lot of them feature robots. The last one, I'm working on now, will have sixteen robots on the cover.

CFF: Do you regularly review your sketchbooks, or once you sketch something it's in your mind?

KALUTA: No. I regularly review them. It's in my mind as well. I know most of the sketchbooks page by page, but every once in a while I surprise myself.

CFF: So you review them with an eye toward constructing a larger story picture?

KALUTA: Sometimes, yes. If I had all those sketchbooks here, there are six of them, six complete sketchbooks or almost complete. If you went from the first one all the way through to the last, you would see recurring themes as they grow. And all of the sudden, they'll change to something completely different. Like, one pose that I was always trying to get. It would be a pose that, I could have someone pose, you know a woman. It would have to be a ballerina or a ballet dancer because it's a real contorting pose, but done with grace and as I've drawn it, the last time I did it and similar to that, it was completely fluid and all the muscle was in the right place, there was over muscle, and she was sitting even though there wasn't anything. She was sitting on...you could see it because the weight of the body and everything and I was very pleased with it. Eventually, that figure will end up somewhere in some one of its many kind of positions in a piece that I'm working on. There's a picture that I'm working on called "The Stealer of Souls" with a sketch in The Studio book, which is one of the first sketches. I've made 10 or 15 drawings over the past five years, sketches and so forth, of the Stealer of Souls, and I have the actual piece I'm working on which is this big, and all kinds of decorative stuff with salamanders and serpents and all kinds of thistles surrounding this sort of beast-like lady. Of course, in the first eight of the drawings she was just a regular girl of the woods. I kept envisioning her as very, very white in a deep green pool, like Sabu. But it changed into a woman with wolf's [something] but she's still very, very white with a kind of a yellow [something] with wood stuff all stuck through her hair, matted and salamanders all over. She's still "The Stealer of Souls", but that's up to anybody who wants to say "Why did you do that?" "Is it because women are stealers of men's souls?" There's that trip. "Are the salamanders souls of the forest?"

That's why I love titling the pictures. I savor that. Because you can add so much by just bending things around. I was talking to Steve Hickman. He had a picture of a woman in a curlycued breastplate with a little animal on her shoulder and there was a huge fire-opal on the wall nearby. And I said, "Did you ever title that picture?" "Well, I call it Princess of Xenadu" no, "Princess of Atlantis." So I said, "Wait a minute. Why don't you call it Slave of Atlantis?" He said, "Look at the look on her face, it's so commanding." I said, "Yeah, that's where the ambiguity comes in. You wouldn't see it. There's more power in having a slave have that attitude than having a princess where everybody expects her to have that attitude" He started to see the glimmerings of that, but I don't know if he's going to go for it. He doesn't title pictures that way. He's very strict. I'm always trying to find the side doors.

CFF: Who's going to be publishing Metropolis?

KALUTA: Dragon's Dream, so far. They've got to send me some money. It might even be, what do they call themselves, Magnetic Storm. Might be Big O.

CFF: I'd like to make sure we get the stuff covered that everybody wants to read about, like how many cats you own.

KALUTA: I used to own two. Back when I had a small place there was just enough room for a cat...you want me to go into this?

CFF: Everybody wants to hear that stuff.

KALUTA: O.K. One was Bernie's cat, that we lured into the building back when we lived in the same building as Jeff. He hid out for two or three weeks. His name was Gizbaz, which comes from Frip Frap and Gizbaz, which is based on Bill Cosby's thing about swearing words. And then Harper was checking out the cat's paw and he has this extra something or other, so when he was walking, he looked like a lion. So he had this middle initial T for Thunderpaw, and Pancho was his first name, "Pancho T. Gizbaz." And the other was named Sam, which was really Samantha. It was a little kitten that this girl had which was lonely because she was at work, so she said, "Here, you want a kitten?" Gizbaz grabbed it and dragged it around, bit on it and stuff. But when I moved out, I had both the cats. Bernie's cat and my cat, or Bonnie Moore's cat, actually. There I was in a room eight feet wide by fourteen feet long and they were going nuts. They would run across my face at night. A friend of mine, Dan Green, you know the name? He lived out in Brooklyn and he had three floors so I said, "You want some cats?" He said, "I'd love them." They loved it.

CFF: What section of New York do you live in?

KALUTA: Manhattan.

CFF: Do you like the city?

KALUTA: Yeah.

CFF: You like everything, but this undercurrent of makemoney-makemoney-makemoney.

KALUTA: Yeah. I enjoy that undercurrent too because it makes New York sparkle. You go to Chicago and there's no reason for anybody to be there because, oh,

I'm sorry. I don't mean to insult anybody. They'll come to me and say, "The next thing you're going to mention is gangsters", but I've been in other big cities and they don't have that zzzzt. Because no one is breaking their neck to make money for no reason other than to pay New York. It demands that you pay it as much money as you can. It's a very "Metropolis" city.

CFF: Do you use models very often?

KALUTA: Not very often. I used Kathy Field for Xanadu because she looked like Madame Xanadu. I can remember the day I brought her into DC after having done five covers. I had never mentioned that it was a real person. People flipped out. Joe Orlando was picking his teeth up off the floor. Jack Harris said, "Oh, look, Xanadu!" Mostly, I make it up. When I have a model in front of me, I get into doing every little thing, like I would want to paint what will be a five o'clock shadow that you have. But that's not necessary to the way I draw, to my style. When I do a drawing like that, it's like "Umm, where did that come from?"

So the way I draw people is from my sketchbooks or my own learning more about the figure.

CFF: How long does it generally take from the time you see something that sparks your interest until the time that it actually gets into a painting.

KALUTA: Sometimes it's immediate. There's something in my sketchbooks. The other day I was in a restaurant and I played some music. I played Linda Ronstadt singing "Tumbling Dice." And as soon as it came on, as soon as she said, "Throw me the tumbling dice," there was a drawing of two women leaning up against each other, one leaning back like that, and they are sitting on the words "Tumbling Dice" and that's the beginning of an idea. One time I was riding on a train from Scotland to England and there was a river. It was a very high bridge and the river was way down there and I looked down and in my imagination I saw a woman floating in the water and I've drawn it, but I have an idea for a picture called "The Modern Ophelia." It's right there, which is part of another thing called "The Drowned Woman." It's a circular picture. It's just the bottom of a well. You don't see the walls and the woman is in there very romantically and she's drowned. Why has she drowned? What's down in that well? Of course, if you want to be real Victorian hokey, you put pennies shining up through the water. But it's fun to do. The thing that people don't see, of course, and why a lot of people like looking at sketchbooks is "what did they go through? What did they reject?" What were the leavings? What are the cast aways? A lot of stuff is just tossed away.

CFF: So it's taken you about eight years...

KALUTA: Eight years to get the first picture of Metropolis...I have notes and lists of things to do and going back eight years one of the recurring things "Get to work on Metropolis. Get to work on Metropolis." I was first going to do this just for myself. And then it was going to be for (something) Enterprises. And then it was going to be for myself again. And then it was going to be for Cochran, the art magnate. And then it was going to be for myself and then it was going to be for Dragon's Dream. There are a lot of sketches, a lot of layouts, and a lot of ideas.

CFF: You're going to do 40 of them? You have a long term project.

KALUTA: You see, all the time in the past, all these pictures have been building up in my mind. I read the book over and over and over again. So much so, that while I don't speak German and I can't read German, but when I was in Germany, a guy had the first edition of Metropolis in German (and I have been talking with Dragon's Dream about having it re-translated) and I knew the book so well that I could just follow every word and it was translated beautifully, because that book itself is so poetic. There'd be no sense in getting a new translation. There might be a change for an odd word here or there.

CFF: What's the quickest you ever did a finished painting?

KALUTA: Overnight.

CFF: Which one was that?

KALUTA: The Original Monster Mash album cover. And any number of others you see, numerous illustrations. The Sword of Sherazer.

CFF: Is DC the only comic book maker that you've worked for?

KALUTA: I worked for Marvel, a couple three-covers. One with a little help from Johnny Romita.

CFF: The White-Out King?

KALUTA: Yeah. The Edge of the Kazar cover. You wouldn't know it to look at it. There are about two spots that I painted. The rest of the cover Johnny Romita painted over.

CFF: Is that one of the things that you found so restrictive about comics, that they changed your work?

KALUTA: No. Johnny Romita's the only person who ever changed my work. He was cured of that after he decided to help me with the Carson of Venus Thing. I said, "What have you done?" He said, "Well, you didn't do this. You didn't do that." I said, "Look, it's a five page

BEFORE I MAKE YOU CHOKE TO DEATH EATING YOUR OWN LITTLE WINGS, BUG?
I'VE SPENT MUCH TOO MUCH TIME TORTURING MY DEAR BROTHER'S DREAMS TO DRIVE HIM TO THIS SPOT TO HAVE YOU INTERFERE.
YOU'RE... VARO! YOU'RE... EVIL.

strip at least. Besides, since you haven't read this stuff you didn't realize that Venusians do not grow facial hair. You give this guy goatees and stuff and then you didn't give him goatees later on."

I get my work changed very rarely. I didn't like Marvel because they made me change things. All the time it was "Make the muscles bigger. Make the muscles bigger. Make Conan handsomer." I got in an argument with Johnny Romita about that. He said, "Make him handsomer. Make him handsomer." I said, "This guy kills people. He's a *#%# barbarian. He cuts their guts out, leaves them steaming in front of them and then laughs. And you want him prettier?" And he looked at me, insulted. See, this was their bread and butter.

They had a glass case with the final cover and my original picture, to show how the picture might be unsuitable for publication until the Production Department changes it. And as I was moseying up toward this cabinet, there was a father and his son and the father was saying, "See, this shows what happens when the painting is unsuitable. They touch it up and make it better." And the little boy says, "How better?" So the father says, "Well, look. See how big the teeth are and look at the blood in there." And the father walks away. And the little boy stood there looking at them and said, "You know, I like that one best." I was standing behind him and that's all I needed. I said in my mind, "Bright kid!" Honest.

CFF: There is one question that I know a lot of people would be interested in and that is, you've been working on speculation for a long time now. How do you deal with New York? How do you manage to pay the rent and buy the bread?

KALUTA: I sell original artwork, when I don't have any money. I do the covers for the comics. And there are more of the covers out than people really know, I think. In fact, before the change of helm over there, I had covers and there was always feedback. I saw all the covers that came out. But when I started working for Jenette there, I was doing covers for a year before anybody noticed I was doing covers again. The Studio book. We just got an advance. There's advances against the posters.

CFF: Do you get a percentage of both the posters and The Studio?

KALUTA: Yes. That's pretty much it. I used to take commissions, but I would end up overdoing the picture to the point where I knew I was losing money. Because the picture commands, not the price. If the picture needs something, it's got to get it even if it's going to take another three weeks. So I stopped accepting them or stopped saying I would, which is harder for me.

CFF: Do you have any plans after Metropolis, or is that as far as you're thinking right now?

KALUTA: That's as far as planning right now. The only other plans I have, I have at least three other things "Stealer of Souls" is unfinished. There is a picture in the series of "The Fate of Dollies Lost in Dreams" called "Saturday Afternoon Joanie Spent Redecorating Her Room" and that's her painting the moon.

20 Years Ago this Month

TALES OF SUSPENSE
WILL IRON MAN MEET HIS DOOM, WHEN HE INVADES "the STRONGHOLD of DR. STRANGE?"
"NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL YOU ARE, IRON MAN, YOU'RE NOT IMMUNE TO THE LIFE-SAVING ELECTRICITY THAT SAME ELECTRICITY WILL BE SHUTTING OFF—INCH BY INCH!"
DR. STRANGE... THE MOST DANGEROUS FOE EVER TO CHALLENGE IRON MAN'S MIGHT!

12 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
EVEN YOUR LIMITLESS STRENGTH CANNOT SAVE YOU FROM MR. HULK! ALL YOUR POWER IS NOTHING TO COMPARE WITH I AM "THE METAL MASTER!"
IS THE HULK FINALLY HANDED "THE METAL MASTER" IT COULD MEAN THE END OF THE HUMAN RACE!
A FULL-LENGTH EPIC SUPER-THRILLER!

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
The Fantastic Four
HOW MUCH ACTUAL HOME WORK DOES IT TAKE TO CRAM IT BY DAVID WRIGHT O'CONNELL
The SUB-MARINER STRIKES!
UNDERSEA MONARCH VERSUS AMERICA'S GREATEST SUPER-HEROES! PLUS THE SURPRISE RETURN OF NAMOR THE SUB-MARINER'S ARCH-VILLAIN!

TALES TO ASTONISH
IS THIS THE END OF ANT-MAN?
"THE MAD MASTER OF TIME!" HAD THE ONE POWER WHICH EVEN ANT-MAN WAS HELPLESS AGAINST! POWER OF OLD AGE!!
DON'T MISS THIS STARTLING DRAMATIC ANT-MAN SAGA!
I'M GETTING OLDER!
OLDER...
...OLDER!!

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WITH WIT AND ENERGY... E-MAN AND HIS ARTIST ARE EXPANDING THE ENJOYMENT OF COMIC READERS EVERYWHERE.

JOE STATON

INTERVIEWED

CONDUCTED BY HAL SCHUSTER

CF: Here we are at Cosmic Visions, talking to Joe Staton, the Art Director of First Comics, also the artist on the new **E-Man** book, the original creator, along with Nick Cuti, of the E-Man character and a veteran of Marvel and DC Comics.

I guess the best place to begin is by asking how you became interested in comics. Did you begin reading them first or did you decide to become a comics professional and then begin reading them?

Staton: I was always reading comics when I was a little kid. Comics, comic strips...I guess I was reading strips in the papers first. It seems like I learned to read by reading Superman and Superboy and stuff like that. I was always reading comics.

CF: You began to read DCs first?

Staton: When I was first reading comics that was all there was. There was DC and Dell. I don't remember anything else. I would read Chip and Dale and Superman. That was comics. There wasn't any Marvel.

CF: Did any particular writers or artists tend to draw your eye in those days?

Staton: I was always attracted to sort of peculiar kinds of things. I was really fond of Wayne Boring and Chester Gould just for the oddity of the way they drew. It was very attractive. I loved Mary Jane Sniffles and the Disney books...a kind of surrealism to the whole thing.

CF: Did you ever pick up any of the Jingle Jangles or was that after that time?

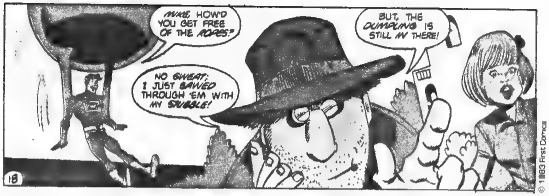
Staton: I think that was after that. I don't remember that.

CF: Did you ever receive any formal training?

Staton: I went to college in Kentucky. I have a regular fine arts degree. Nobody really trains you to draw comic books, but I'm glad I do have some background. I keep going to classes, occasionally, whenever I get the time.

CF: When you were in art school, did you tend to draw primarily from the masters or classical artwork or did you also look at strip art? What were your influences?

Staton: I was working at everything. When I was in school it was a period of Pop Art so there was comic strip art all over the place. The only problem was that I would take it seriously. The teachers though it should be used as an element of design or satire or something, but I was actually interested in the drawing.


MAN, HOW'D YOU GET FREE OF THE ROPES?
NO SWEAT. I JUST BANGED THROUGH 'EM WITH MY SHOULDER!
BUT, THE DYNAMITE IS STILL IN THERE!
18
© 1983 First Comics

CF: Was this during the Camp Craze period from the Batman TV show?

Staton: There would have been overlap there.

CF: When you came out of school, where did you go to begin your career?

Staton: I went off to New York. My first job straight from the South was working in Harlem at a rubber duck factory designing toys – inflatable point of purchase displays such as huge whiskey bottles. I designed a Pinto pony when Pinto cars first came out for displays in showrooms. I designed inflatable hot dogs and mufflers...I don't know, it was kind of fun.

CF: You mentioned coming up from the South. Where in the South were you living?

Staton: I was born in North Caroline, I mostly grew up in Tennessee, I went to school in Kentucky, so I'm basically a Southern boy. Like all Southern boys I headed to New York to find fame and fortune or failure.

CF: That used to be the case.

Staton: If you're interested in publishing, I think that's still it. Anything with the media, it's still New York or California. I suppose there are some people who head for Atlanta.

CF: How long did you stay designing toys?

Staton: I guess I was there nearly a year. Then I struck out deciding it was time to get into comics. I didn't quite make it at first and I did other things like being an assistant to a photographer and working at production work at newspapers in Brooklyn just to keep going.

I'LL CONSIDER US EVEN, FRIEND, IF YOU TELL ME WHAT CAUSED THE EXPLOSION!
BEATS ME! FIRST THING I KNEW, A BIG STACKA LIRES WENT KABOOM! AND THERE WASN'T NO BOMB KABOOM IN 'EM, 'CAUSE I CHECK 'EM!
REAL WEIRD! AND THIS AIN'T THE FIRST TIME IT'S HAPPENED!
YOU'RE TELLING ME!
© 1983 First Comics

CF: Which paper did you work for?

Staton: I was the **Sunset News and Home Reporter**. There are other papers I worked for that I've forgotten the names of. The were all minor neighborhood papers in Brooklyn. I learned to live with deadlines that way.

CF: That's something that the younger generation of artists seem to have trouble with.

Staton: Well there's a difference in generations there and a difference in attitudes.

CF: While working for these newspapers, did you contact the comic companies?

Staton: Off and on I had taken in samples and gotten nowhere. Finally, I was working at one of the newspapers and it occurred to someone that for what they were paying me they could hire two Puerto Ricans. So, they fired me and hired two Puerto Ricans and – this is true! This is not a racist thing, this is entirely true – that's when I got married, when I was completely unemployed. Actually, it was good for me in the long run. It left me free to do samples and when I was on my honeymoon I went to Charlton and took samples in and got my first contract.

CF: Who turned down your work before that?

Staton: Sol Harrison, Frank Giacoia, the normal run of people who were around at that time. Giacoia was at Marvel.

CF: And he rejected your artwork?

Staton: Oh yeah.

CF: Did he feel it didn't match the house style or wasn't developed enough or...

Staton: He just...rejected it!

CF: And then you went up to Charlton. Was Dick Giordano still there?

Staton: It was right after Dick had left. Sal Gentile was the editor. George Wildman was his assistant. They gave me some ghost stories and some romance stories to do. That was the first material I'd had.

CF: A lot of artists that were rejected at other companies have gone through Charlton.

Staton: At one time, yeah.

CF: Tom Sutton and John Byrne...

Staton: Jim Aparo certainly started at Charlton.

CF: Steve Ditko had two different periods over there.
Staton: Right. That was his best work too.
CF: I believe Denny O'Neil started over there.
Staton: Working with Apero...
CF: And that wonderful western strip.
Staton: Wunder. And the thing with Pat Boyette, "The Children of Doom." Denny did that. That was great.
CF: Pat Boyette is another artist that never made it at Marvel or DC but did a great deal of work for Charlton.
Staton: I guess he was a little too extreme for either of them. He didn't quite fit the house style.
CF: Eccentric styles are more interesting. People like Frank Robbins and Pat Boyette. Your constant, solid, run-of-the-mill, center artists are the ones that both Marvel and DC seem to favor.
Staton: Well certainly they're producing a product and they want the product to retain it's identity. They have

reasons for it.
CF: So if a Milton Caniff walked in or a Noel Sickles walked in...
Staton: They wouldn't be hired today.
CF: And yet Milton Caniff certainly proved that he could hold a large audience.
Staton: Yes, but he hasn't proved that he can hold a large direct sales comics audience.
CF: I guess we'll find out when Dennis Kitchen publishes Steve Canyon.
Staton: That will be neat. Suddenly we'll have a resurgence of Milton Caniff clones.
CF: Not just Caniff. I think there's a great deal of resurgence in a number of the older artists.
Staton: I would hope so.
CF: Certainly Eisner for one. After you were at Charlton for a while you started doing what our audience would probably find most interesting, that is super heroes.
Staton: Well, sort of super heroes, yeah. That was after Sal had retired and George Wildman had become editor. Nick Cuti was George's assistant. At one point George commissioned Nick and some other people to come up with ideas for superheroes. Charlton at one time had had superheroes and they were thinking about

adding more. The idea that Nick came up with and asked me whether I'd be interested in helping him develop was a weird character called E-Man. I didn't sound that weird when Nick first called me on it. I thought it was something like a retread of Captain Atom. It became more and more weird as we went on with it.
CF: That brings up an interesting question. When they were creating these new characters, why was so little done to revive their older characters?
Staton: I guess they assumed they had given those characters their shot and they really hadn't made it.
CF: And there was no audience for it?
Staton: Certainly there might be today, but it was a little different then.
CF: So your work on E-Man brought you to the attention of the companies that had previously rejected you.
Staton: Right. Roy Thomas hired me to ink the **Avengers** on the basis of doing **E-Man**.
CF: Did you go over to Marvel then or did you continue to do work for Charlton as well as Marvel?
Staton: I continued working for Charlton for a while. I eventually wound up at Marvel and then started doing work at DC. Actually there was an overlap there where I was trying to juggle three different companies at once. That really didn't work.
CF: What was the sentiment at the three companies on having you work for their competitors?
Staton: Charlton didn't care. They were pretty much phasing out anyway I guess. DC and Marvel wanted me to work specifically for them. At the time DC was offering a better deal. Certainly that's changed also.
CF: So you went over to DC at that time?
Staton: I was at Marvel for I guess around three years. I inked the Avengers for a while and I inked the Hulk for a good while -- did some work for the black-and-whites... The problem was that I was never able to get any pencilling work at Marvel outside the black-and-whites because of a fairly restrictive overall look.
CF: You started doing color work at DC?
Staton: At first at DC I was doing finishing inking.
CF: For which titles?
Staton: A very forgetable thing - Karate Kid, a Creeper

back up.

CF: Was that over Estrada?

Staton: Yeah. I kind of like Estrada.

CF: He's another one of those unique styles.

Staton: He has a very curious independent...

CF: Obviously he must not have fallen within the mainstream of DC art.

Staton: The thing with Estrada was that he could lay out a book very quickly and they were trying to aquire a lot of finishers who could smooth out and homoginize his style to where it was in the mainstream. Of course, the irony there is that having an eccentric style I found it difficult to find the kind of placement I wanted and I was being used to homoginize someone with an eccentric style.

CF: Did you find that DC tended to accept eccentric styles more than Marvel did? For example, in the early 60s, Marvel was primarily Jack Kirby with some Steve Ditko and John Heck and Larry Leiber, whereas DC really went off in a great number of different directions with Sekowsky, Joe Kubert, Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino ...none of whom can really be identified as looking like any of the others.

Staton: Actually, at the time I was at Marvel I think the house style was more John Buscema. I think that was past Kirby's heyday. And DC – this was past the time Sekowsky was there. I hit both companies at a time when they were tending toward homoginizing. I guess since the middle '70s, DC has essentially been concerned with supporting its merchandising. That obviously tends toward homoginizing material. They were really more concerned with making their characters match their merchandised identities.

CF: Were they trying to have a commercial art – an advertising type approach to their books?

Staton: That has always been a trend there, at least since Neal Adams was the presence in the '60s.

CF: Neal Adams or Dick Giordano?

Staton: Well, Neal basically established a certain style at DC that lasted until Jose Luis Lopez started to establish a newer identity. Today the artists at DC are pretty much expected to trace the style book that Garcia Lopez prepared for merchandising the characters.

CF: Isn't there a certain similarity between Lopez and Giordano's styles?

Staton: Certainly there is a similarity there. It's not that great a jump. It's a slight evolution.

CF: I've been told by a number of people that Neal Adams was very strongly influenced by Giordano and that a lot of the influence you see in comics came from Stan Drake and Dick Giordano via Neal Adams.

Staton: Oh certainly, there is that, yes. Everything is a couple of generations.

CF: So we were talking about whether DC was willing to be more eccentric than Marvel.

Staton: Well, certainly when DC finally realized that Marvel was overtaking them or perhaps passing them in sales, they floundered about, clutching at – they were more tolerant of certain styles at a certain point because they weren't sure what was selling and they were attempting to find something. By the time I was there they had pretty much resigned themselves to whatever role they were playing and were consolidating it.

CF: Didn't these various styles exist at DC in the early '60s before they really knew that Marvel was overtaking them?

Staton: What styles would you mean?

CF: Sekowsky, Kubert, Infantino, Kane...

Staton: All of that seemed to me to be kind of left over from the previous house style.

CF: So you see that much of a similarity in those styles?

Staton: Well, certainly Infantino and Kane.

CF: Infantino and Kubert?

Staton: Yeah, there seems to be a tremendous similarity there.

CF: Getting back to when you went over to DC. They were bringing you in as a homoginizing influence?

Staton: They were doing that with lots of people.

CF: Who came in along with you about this period of time?

Staton: Now that you ask me to pin it down I really can't think of anybody. I seemed to be in between generations all the way through in comics. Never quite a member of the proper class.

--AN EXPERIENCE THAT SOUNDS AS IF SCHMALTZBERG'S MINDELF COULD HAVE STAGED IT--
--AND IT MAKES TRONN WANT TO QUIT SUPER-HEROING AND BECOME A MOVIE STAR!
PRETTY FISHY COINCIDENCE, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT, TOO.

SO WHERE ARE YOU GO--
TO SCHMALTZBERG'S PALATIAL "COTTAGE" IN THE HAMPTONS--
-- TO ASK HIM A FEW HARD QUESTIONS. YOU COMIN', TRONN?
WHY NOT? I DON'T HAVE ANY BETTER IDEAS...
17
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I CAN'T, YOUNG LADY. A PRIOR BRAIN INJURY IS PREVENTING THE POISON FROM KILLING HIM--
--BUT IT ALSO PREVENTS US FROM HELPING WILDCAT.
HE MIGHT REMAIN IN A COMA FOR YEARS./
NO!
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THEN HE'S AS GOOD AS DEAD...
NO!
I KNOW WHAT IT MUST BE! WHEN THE KOALA USED HIS FROST RAY TO TAKE OVER WILDCAT'S MIND/
THAT'S WHEN HIS SPEECH STARTED DETERIORATING--AND WE JUST THOUGHT HE WAS GETTING PUNCH-DRUNK!
#66.
9

CF: You're not quite old enough and you're not quite young enough.

Staton: I'm the only survivor -- apparently the only one of my generation who thought it was an admirable ambition to draw Superman. That was my ambition getting into comics. I'm the only person that I'm aquainted with who actively held that ambition. Anyone else who held that ambition tried to get into comics at a time when DC was a closed shop. I came in at a time when the ambitions of my generation were becomming rather pointless.

CF: There seems to be an older generation, a generation that grew up with the DCs in the golden age, another generation that just devoured the early Marvels and have no DC influence and now once again we seem to be getting some people who are either going back to the older styles or are looking at the newer DCs and are coming in from DC rather than from Marvel. You didn't really fit into that pattern.

Staton: I came in after the DCs and before the Marvels. I'm the only representative of the lost years of comics.

CF: Has this tended to influence your career in any way?

Staton: It's always left me odd man out, never quite fitting into anyone's perception of how things should be done.

CF: When you were at DC you started pencilling as well. Which titles were these and how do you feel you affected them?

Staton: Off and on I pencilled just about everything.

CF: You were given the very unfortunate position of coming onto a title after Wood was on it or coming onto a title after Cockrum was on it or coming onto a title right there was a third one where you came onto a title right after someone very, very popular had just finished doing it. Was it Simonson?

Staton: Oh, the Metal Men?

CF: You followed Simonson, you followed Wood and you followed Cockrum. Yet the books retained their popularity and these were three very different artists. Did you try to continue with the style of the artist who had been previously on the title, or did you try to create your own identity?

Staton: Certainly on the Metal Men I tried to maintain some of Walt's approach which I really admired and tried to handle it sort of the way Andru would handle it, Ross Andru. With JSA I tried very hard to maintain Wood's approach. When we created the Huntress, that's basically a Wood character.

CF: When you thought you couldn't draw like Wood, is that when you decided to add some of your own influences?

Staton: Well they creep up on you anywey.

CF: That's no criticism; very few people can draw like Wood.

Staton: Right. I originally took over the Justice Society on the promise that Wood was going to return to inking it and that was really the only reason I took that book. I wound up trapped on it for a while. I wind up being trapped on things a lot. I took the Legion as a fill in and ended up cursed with that for a substantial period of time.

CF: For the Legion you drew a very large number of characters.

Staton: Very badly.

CF: Quite a number of artists really don't like getting team books because they don't like doing a large number of characters. Yet here, simultaneously, you were doing Metal Men and...

Staton: Actually, I don't think they were simultaneous.

CF: Wasn't there a point of overlap?

Staton: There may have been an overlap. I'm sure I wasn't doing all three books at once. I couldn't have done that.

CF: Regardless, you did three team books. Most artists don't like doing even one team book.

Staton: Oh, I don't like doing team books. I kind of enjoyed doing the Justices. I don't see the Metal Men as a team book. It's just an eccentric weird thing off on it's own. There are a lot of characters, but it's not from the same mold as your standard team book.

CF: When you were doing the Metal Men, did you bring in any influences from your previous work on E-Man?

Staton: Oh, yeah. There was quite a bit of the E-Man

approach in Metal Men.

CF: The specific approach which has become identified with the name Joe Staton -- this style that came out of E-Man -- was present in the Metal Men book and is certainly present again in the work you're doing now.

Staton: It was in Plastic Man too.

CF: Where does this style derive from?

Staton: It derives from that appreciation for the lost years of comics and a fondness for a kind of work that was even previous to that where fairly straight stories were told with fairly humorous drawings -- something like Eisner. That's fairly funny drawing, but the stories are very straight.

CF: Like the styles of Eisner, Jack Cole, Klaus Nordling...

Staton: Klaus Nordling I don't really know.

CF: Lady Luck?

Staton: I don't really know Lady Luck.

CF: It was in the back of the Spirit sections.

Staton: Actually old C.C. Beck -- Captain Marvel lasted long enough for me to remember it and to be very impressed with the talking tiger and that sort of thing.

CF: It's interesting that you point out that you consider stronger story. The story should make sense without the comedy and without the satire. That's what I'm shooting for.

CF: Did you happen to read any of the "Just A Story" stories that DC published where Johnny Peril started out?

Staton: I don't think so.

CF: They were told in a very satirical vein, but it would be a straight adventure story with no costume characters and usually a quirk at the ending. It was almost like you were seeing that type of thirties movie in which James Cagney at the very end would pretend that he was afraid in order to help the little kids.

Staton: All right, yeah.

CF: It was done in this way, but again you have the straight adventure with the humorous, almost ironic, overtones. Do you think there is any influence in your work by what has been done in theater?

Staton: I don't know. You're always influenced by movies. Maybe Popeye and Goon Island or something like that.

CF: Certainly Eisner was very influenced by movie story

"FINALLY, HE'D FOUND THE HOME HE'D SOUGHT FOR SO LONG! NOW HE HAD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HE WANTED TO DO THERE.
"WAY RAD! TUBULAR TO THE MAX--LIKE, TOTALLY"?!?
SOPHOMORIC.
"ONE DAY, HE FOUND HIMSELF FASCINATED BY SOME COMIC BOOKS MY BROTHER LEFT BEHIND... AND HE DECIDED TO BECOME A SUPER-HERO!"
...STUFF ARE LEGENDS-- AND A GIRL'S BREAKING ... BOOM!
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important the telling of a straight story with humorous overtones as opposed to the heavy handed approach that others have used with the very humorous stories. When I talked to C.C. Beck, he mentioned that what he thought destroyed the Captain Marvel character when it was brought back in the early '70s was that the approach to it was straight humorous. Then when they realized that the straight humor wasn't working they went totally in the other way and dropped humor entirely. He feels that what made Captain Marvel originally work, (and he's probably the artist that most people identify with) was the straight adventure approach with humorous overtones.

Staton: Yeah, exactly.

CF: So you're saying that that same thing exists in the work that you're doing.

Staton: I certainly hope so. I hope that I'm creating characters who are believable and understandable and that they're doing things that you'd be interested in rather than just laughing at them. I think if there are elements of comedy and elements of satire, very strong elements even, they have to be held together by an even telling. You were in turn influenced by Eisner.

Staton: I was very influenced by that Harvey reprint. There seems to have been a lot of people influenced by that particular book.

CF: I think it's unfortunate that so much of this Golden Age material for a long long time was just totally unavailable. It's interesting that a lot of the artists are bringing these styles back now.

Staton: With the direct market there's a little more flexibility to try out more eccentric ways of doing things. Everything doesn't have to be totally homoginized. I think you're going to be finding people taking advantage of that.

CF: So at DC you were working on these three very different books. The Metal Men book was right in the mainstream of your style; it was a Joe Staton book.

Staton: That was Marty Pasko getting really crazy with characters like Dr. Strange Love and Bizarre Babies -- really my kind of stories.

CF: Steve Gerber was on that for a while, wasn't he?

Staton: He did the first issue with Walt. I didn't work with him at all.

CF: The other two titles you were working on, the **All Star Squadron**, which was very dependant on nostalgie for the Justice Society, and the **Legion of Super Heroes**, were not at all that type of book. These were very straight books. There were no humorous overtones, at least at that point in the Justice Society's history [Originally, of course there was, back in the '40s). The legion had never shown humorous overtones. Did you feel comfortable with that type of book?

Staton: Actually no. I was never particularly comfortable doing that sort of thing. When you're working for a living you do what's necessary. The Justice Society I worked on very consciousiyout of respect for Wood. I tried to keep that style going as best I could. With the inking I got it was very difficult. On the Legion – I was originally filling in as a favor to Paul Levitz. I had always disliked that book. I had no sympathy for it whatsoever. I got trapped on it because they couldn't get anyone else willing to take it over.

CF: You mentioned the inkers you had on the Justice Society. Do you feel that you were given a poor selection of inkers?

Staton: I suppose people do what they have to do. Other people were hired to homoginize me the way I was hired to homoginize Rick Estrada. That's just the way it goes.

CF: On these books you felt uncomfortable with, do you feel that your best work was given a chance to appear or do you feel that your discomfort affected the work itself?

Staton: When I was on the Legion I really burned out totally. I was doing work mechanically that I hated. Nobody should ever do that. It's better just to quit.

CF: Later in your career at DC, Bob Layton became almost the Joe Staton inker, didn't he?

Staton: That was on the Justice Society...

CF: How did you feel about Layton as an inker?

Staton: Initially Layton had worked with Wood and was willing to try to continue Wood's approach, which is what I was interested in there. Then Layton veered off into rather peculiar directions, both personally and professionally and became unsympathetic to both Wood's approach and my approach. It became a very difficult relationship.

CF: What type of work was he attempting?

Staton: Lord knows.

CF: After doing these titles for DC, you went on to Marvel I believe.

Staton: No, I never went back to Marvel

CF: What did you do during that...

Staton: I did 35 issues of **Green Lantern**. That's a book I enjoyed and found really easy to do and nobody noticed.

CF: When you approached Green Lantern there had been very, very different approaches to the character. There was some work that Gil Kane had done – he basically created a space opera – then there was the Neal Adams approach which was more gritty and down to Earth – almost an Easy Rider type of "Let's explore America" approach. Which look did you feel was most appropriate to the character when you came on the title?

Staton: I guess I identified with both of them. Certainly the way the character moves and articulates is Gil's. Gil was beautiful at that. The face I was adapting was Neal's.

CF: No up-turned nose?

Staton: Oh, you get those occasionally. I don't mind an up-turned nose or two now and then.

CF: In every panel?

Staton: Not in every panel.

CF: I'm surprised nobody has ever taught Gil Kane how to draw a nose after all this time.

Staton: I think Gil can draw.

CF: He does everything else fairly well, but not noses.

Staton: Everybody has their problems.

CF: How did you approach the scene setting?

Staton: I basically always set my scenes to look like Gil's. I worked for Gil for a while. At various times I've been Gil Kane. While I was working for Marvel I did a lot of layouts for Gil.

CF: On which books?

Staton: On Spiderman, Conan, Ghost Rider, a thing he did for Europe called Jason Drumm...

CF: You didn't do those horrible **Spiderman** with-all-of-those-arms issues I hope.

Staton: No, I came right after that.

CF: Have you ghosted for any other artists?

Staton: No, just Gil. I'm a real good Gil Kane.

CF: How did you become associated with Gil Kane and end up as his ghost?

Staton: He saw **E-Man** – it goes back that far – and he

called up and asked if I would like to lay stuff out for him. Actually I think I was working for Gil after **E-Man** was cancelled. I really didn't have much outlet for pencilling so I was perfectly happy to be Gil.

CF: Did you find it ironic that the same companies that rejected your pencils accepted your pencils when they were signed Gil Kane?

Staton: One of life's ironies. I had an agreement with John Verporten, who was a nice guy and a straight-shooter, that I'd be credited on the Prisoner...John's gone now and the Prisoner's never come out.

CF: Don't they have two versions of the Prisoner?

Staton: Kirby redid the same version. I don't know if either one is ever coming out.

CF: So you worked assisting Gil Kane, ghosting him, having your pencils appear in places where they could not have appeared otherwise.

Staton: Right.

CF: That's fascinating. Do you ever find that your art style tends to be very similar. I noted that when you mentioned your art influences from which your style derives, you don't mention Gil Kane.

Staton: An oversight. It's a major influence, obviously.

CF: On the Green Lantern character, this Gil Kane influence in your style must have figured prevalantly.

Staton: Certainly. The way Green Lantern flies, the way he moves in space – those are all things that Gil does well, things that I tried to learn a lot from Gil.

CF: Do you find the Green Lantern character more fitting in a space opera setting and off the Earth as opposed to on the Earth?

Staton: Both. I liked the idea of the test pilot as the super hero.

CF: It seems that Green Lantern is very derivitive of the Lensmen of Doc Smith, down literally to a lens appearing in the ring which absorbs the energy from the lamp, the guardians of the galaxy with their interstellar...

Staton: I haven't read the Lensmen, but certainly Julie Schwartz knows all that stuff. I'm sure that played a part in it. Julie knows all the science fiction concepts.

CF: Which writers did you work with on Green Lantern?

Staton: I worked with Denny for a long time 'till he burned out at DC and went over to Marvel.

CF: It's interesting, when you talk to Marvel and bring up how many of their people have left the company and gone over to work at DC, they point a big finger at Denny O'Neil and say, "This is a man who went the other way." Why do you think he left DC and went over to Marvel?

Staton: I guess you'd have to ask him.

CF: You worked with Marv?

Staton: For a long time. Marv developed more of a soap opera approach – throwing in problems for everybody – which was kind of fun.

CF: A Marvel approach.

Staton: Marv had an interesting approach. He'd make up a problem having no idea where it was going to go and in a few issues he'd try to figure it out. Sometimes he did and sometimes he didn't. It was fun to see where it would go.

CF: Did you find him an easy writer to work with?

Staton: Marvin? I like working with Marvin. His art directions always made sense and he seemed to know the characters.

CF: George Perez also mentioned that Marv was easy to work with. After you did Green Lantern, is that when you were hired by First Comics?

Staton: Let's see, what was I doing. I had been doing the Huntress for a time.

CF: You continued doing the Huntress, didn't you?

Staton: Even after I went to Chicago, I kept up with it while I had the time.

I had finally gotten to the point of being in line to take over Superman.

CF: From Kurt Swan?

Staton: There was so much merchandising and everything coming in that DC, at the time, was in the position of being short of Superman artists. I was go take over **Action**.

CF: Later they got Gil Kane

Staton: Right.

CF: So they did get the style they wanted.

Staton: At that point I was realizing that the game I was in was not the game that had the prizes. The ambitions I had had become irrelevant. There's really no point in moving into a character that you really don't create. At this point there's really no reason for anyone to do that.

CF: Why is that?

Staton: Because of the royalty system, the whole move to direct sales and the collapse of newstand distribution, the emphasis on advertising and the much better payoff

on licensing if a character clicks. Certainly being the artist on Superman has no payoffs. There's no point in doing it. While I was realizing that and actually starting to move out and make contacts in comics and get more into merchandising and things like that, Mike Gold showed up at my house in New York one night and we had a long talk about something that was coming together in Chicago. They needed people to do books and they needed an art director. Would I be interested in coming out? It was a real traumatic decision because I'm really attached to New York. I think the Hudson Valley is the only rational place to live on this continent. I'm still real fond of comics and I never really wanted to get out of them.

CF: But you didn't want to starve?

Staton: Well I wouldn't have starved. I've always made a very decent living in comics. It's just that the situation in comics had changed to the point that my position had become irrelevant.

CF: What was that position?

Staton: In terms of taking over Superman, the ambition I had come into comics with.

CF: Was taking over Superman?

Staton: Yeah, that was why I got into comics.

CF: Like Wayne Boring.

Staton: Right, and now Wayne Boring is irrelevant. I was in the process of becoming irrelevant.

CF: So what you're saying is that the classic characters which most people identify with comics are no longer worth the time of a good creator, and only the characters which that person creates himself are.

Staton: By and large. There's no point in anybody with any specific ambitions doing a character that he doesn't create.

CF: Do the new royalties programs at Marvel and DC make any change in that?

Staton: Certainly any book that sells well – there's a point to doing **Star Wars** because it sells well. There's no point to doing **Superman** or **Batman** or **Captain America**. There's no point to doing them unless you're breaking in and...

"HE HAD A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT BEING HUMAN, THOUGH. F'RINSTANCE, HOW TO WEAR CLOTHES."
IT'S AN HALLUCINATION... IT MUST BE...!
IS THAT GOOD?
GRUNK
OH, IT'S — I MEAN, YOU'RE — UH... GORGEOUS.
NOW, FOR GOD'S SAKE, PUT THIS ON. PLEASE.
©1983 Paul Chadwick

CF: What about a book like **Daredevil** or the **X-Men**?

Staton: On the basis of the royalties with Marvel, certainly it would be worth doing it, but even there you cut yourself out of long term rewards of major merchandising.

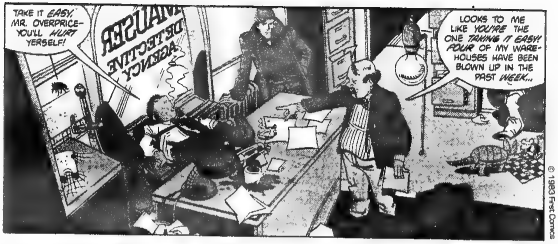
CF: In other words what we're talking about then is a creator creates a character and if he ever leaves that character then only a second rater or a third rater or a fourth rater could do that book. Anyone who is any good just creates his character, does it for a little while and drifts on. Then there will be no continuing characters that last.

Staton: Certainly there will be continuing characters and there will be new people who are potential first rate people who are taking over established characters and using that character to prove themselves and then going on to make better creator deals. You'll either have that or you'll have second stringers doing the established material.

CF: Basically this is akin to the situation in newspaper strips where a major creator comes in and creates a concept and then either finds someone who is not yet recognized or is not yet a major talent who continues that strip or the strip is cancelled when he stops doing it.

Staton: Right.

CF: Except it will happen in comic books.


TAKE IT EASY, MR. OVERPRICE-YOU'LL HURT YERSELF!
LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE THE ONE TAKING A BASHY POUR OF MY WARE-HOUSES HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP IN THE PAST WEEK...
© 1983 First Comics

Staton: It's happening right now.

CF: Traditionally we've seen Superman last though 40 years, Batman last through 40 years, Wonder Woman last through 40 years, and even the Marvel characters have been going for over 20 years now.

Staton: Right. That's amazing, isn't it?

CF: And that's going to change?

Staton: It's in the process of changing.

CF: When you went over to First Comics, you were in a position where every book there was a creator owned character.

Staton: Essentially.

CF: Does First own any of the rights?

Staton: In the case of Warp, that's owned by Dramatic License, which is the partnership that owns the play.

CF: So no one good should do **Warp**?

Staton: Aw, good people should do **Warp**. The royalties are good; the royalties are very good.

CF: Better than on the **X-Men** or...

Staton: No. When you bring up the **X-Men** you slant everything.

CF: Certainly – that's why I brought up the **X-Men**.

Staton: You have people who have their own motivations for doing things – to establish or to re-establish themselves – and use that as a launching pad to sell their own properties again.

CF: In other words, Frank Brunner would not be able to sell his own properties.

Staton: I think Frank is in the position of re-entering comics.

CF: The Doctor Strange reprint that Marvel put out sold primarily on Frank Brunner's reputation.

Staton: I think it's very nice of Marvel to help us re-establish Frank's reputation at this point. Certainly once Frank is re-established in comics, he'll be offering original properties to First or Pacific or whoever. I think that Frank has been out of comics long enough that it's to his advantage to re-establish himself this way.

CF: What happens to **Warp** at that point? Does it get passed on to a second hand creator?

Staton: Perhaps someone who is trying to re-establish himself for some other reason, or to establish himself. Perhaps someone from England who would like to develop an American following. There are a number of possibilities.

CF: Who owns the E-Man property now?

Staton: At this point, First Comics owns it, but I'll own it fairly soon. My percentage of the creator's royalties are being applied to cover First expenses acquiring it from Charlton so I'll own the property fairly soon.

CF: Are you alone going to own it or are you and Cuti going to own it?

Staton: I'm going to own it. If Nick were actually writing the book, his percentage would be applied and he'd be co-owner, but since he's compromised by his position at DC...

CF: What about Marty Pasko who is writing it. Is he going to own any part of it?

Staton: Any new character that Marty creates within the terms of the book – Marty will own a percent – his half or his total or whatever – of that character.

CF: Then the only characters Marty should concentrate on are the characters that enter the strip new. It seems that he would have very little incentive to devote much space in the issue to the leading character.

Staton: Actually he has a fairly substantial motivation because strengthening the book as a total will certainly make it much more viable when he does start to introduce new characters. It's not really to anybody's advantage to damage an established character. If you are involved with an established character it's certainly to your advantage in the long run to build that character as much as possible in terms of reputation and in terms of any subsequent negotiations within the business that you are going to be doing. Besides, Marty is a professional and a good guy and a straight-shooter and does good stuff.

CF: Are you going to work on any other titles at First?

Staton: Not any in the forseeable future. I'm doing staff work and I'm doing 27 pages a month of E-Man and **that's** a little more than a human body can do.

CF: The staff work you're doing is as Art Director?

Staton: Right.

CF: What exactly does that job encompass?

Staton: When you have a real dislike of house styles and when you're trying to encourage eccentricity and

you're also trying to encourage an identity for a line of books, what you are doing is a rather peculiar balancing act. That's what I'm doing. I'm certainly not trying to force anyone to a house style. I'm certainly not trying to encourage anyone to abandon their own style. I'm trying to produce the best possible work and fairly identifiable work. We have a standard cover format, our logos are tending toward a fairly boxy look, our cover backgrounds are deliberately very garish. There's a look to what we're doing. Aside from mechanical work, keeping things on schedule, working with Bruce Patterson to get all the production work and everything done, it's a matter of talking to people as things come in and trying to figure out what's the best way.

CF: Have you made any specific changes in any of the books that have already been announced?

Staton: No. At this point we're working with the people who are doing the books and trying to elaborate on their concepts and characters.

CF: What input have you introduced in the way these characters are layed out?

Staton: It's almost never a matter of changes. Like on **Sable**, both Janice Cohen and I talked to Mike Grell a lot about just how he sees the character. Janice is coloring the book and the coloring is really important in sustaining the mood, how it's going to come across. We've talked to Mike about how this has to be done. Basically it's just working together to try to get that all across. It's hard to explain. It's easier when somebody just sits at a desk with a pot of white paint and just whites out knee caps like they used to do at Marvel. When you're doing something tricky it becomes hard to explain.

CF: Do you find that anything you say really tends to influence the way your artists approach the books they're working on? Let me give you an example. Some years ago, when Stan Lee was still actively running the Marvel line of comics, one of the artists brought him a cover he had done. Stan looked at it and there was green on the cover and he did not like the green. He said, "Green? Green is terrible! We never use green on our covers!" For about two years after that, no one brought him a cover with green on it. Finally a new artist came in and did a cover that had green on it. The other artists looked at it and said, "No, you never bring him a cover like that." Stan Lee looked at it and said, "Wow, that's really nice." Everyone said, "But it has green on it! We're not allowed to have green on a cover here." Stan said, "What do you mean 'we're not allowed to have green on a cover here'?" They replied, "You said you never wanted green on a cover!"

Staton: I hope the people we're working with aren't that jumpy. I haven't seen any examples of that that I know. The only standing editorial policies we have are lot's of heavy armament, lot's of semi-naked women and no elves.

CF: Are there any additional titles planned other than those which have been made public?

Staton: I think at this point everything has been made public that we've signed contracts on. Warp, E-Man, Sable, Star Slayer, American Flag...

CF: Are there any specific types of books that you are interested in obtaining for the line?

Staton: I think we need to come up with a straight super hero from somewhere. Somehow we always feel like we're doing super heroes, but we don't really have any real super heroes. Everything is really off the wall adventure stuff or satire. I think we're going to have to come up with those from somewhere.

CF: What do you mean by a "straight super hero"?

Staton: Oh, somebody in a funny costume with quasi-scientific powers who goes out in the middle of the night and fights crime.

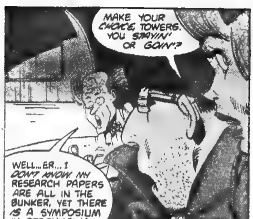
CF: Is there any reason why Eclipse, Pacific and First Comics, all of whom are new companies who have appeared in the last year or two with color comics, lack a super hero between them?

Staton: I guess people who are really interested in doing their own personal thing have seen so many super heroes that they just don't want to do one. I'm sure somebody out there is going to come up with an interesting, creative super hero.

CF: Certainly it's still possible to come up with unique ideas for super heroes.

Staton: I'm sure it's still possible.

...PROVIDED YOU FILL OUT THE REQUIRED FORMS, PAY THE REQUIRED FEE, AND WAIT THE REQUIRED FOUR WEEKS. HMMMMM.
ANY BY THEN, A LOTTA FOLKS MAY "REQUIRE" A PINE BOX, LADY! HEY, I'M TALKIN' TO YOU
DON'T WASTE YOUR ENERGY, MINE...
©1983 Fred Dorman
JUST LET ME EXPEND A LITTLE OF MINE!
TROWN, COME BACK HERE...!


MAKE YOUR CHOICE, TOWERS: YOU SINKIN' OR GOIN'?
WELL...ER... I DON'T KNOW. MY RESEARCH PAPERS ARE ALL IN THE BUNKER, YET THERE IS A SYMPOSIUM IN STOCKHOLM NEXT YEAR I--

CF: Yet it's not happening.

Staton: It's got to. Somebody's got one.

CF: Is there going to be one at First?

Staton: I can't make predictions. I don't know what we're doing until we sign a contract on it.

CF: Are there any particular individuals who you are going to seek out?

Staton: We're in the process of doing that right now.

CF: What type of work do you look for?

Staton: Good work.

CF: How has the response from retailers, distributors and the consumers been for First Comics?

Staton: Pretty good so far. The feedback has been good and it seems like the sales are good.

CF: Have you found any geographic patterns in the sales of particular titles?

Staton: I don't, but the business people might. When there's more books out is when they start making projections.

CF: I imagine that you know more quickly now how well a book is doing than with the old distribution when you had to wait six or seven months for returns to find out if anything had sold or not.

Staton: There are your advance orders and then you wait for reorders so in a few months you know pretty much what you've done.

CF: What countries are you currently appearing in?

Staton: You're getting into stuff you'll have to talk to the business people about. As far as I know, the U.S. Canada, and England.

CF: Are there any foreign editions planned or an foreign licensing planned?

Staton: I know that we're talking to a couple of overseas operations, but again, that's something you'd need to talk to the business people about.

CF: From a publicity stand point, how do you feel the response has been from the press?

Staton: I think we're doing very well. Certainly we've been all over the papers in Chicago and on TV in Chicago. We're getting kind of saturated with Illinois coverage.

CF: There's a world beyond Illinois.

Staton: Certainly, but we're the local boys now. I think we're getting covered pretty well. We're trying to get press releases out all the time. The call goes out, "Manufacture a press release!"

CF: Importantly, you're on time.

Staton: Oh yes.

CF: That's unique. Have you had a problem keeping things on time? Particularly dealing with artists who are notorious for not being on time such as Frank Brunner and Howard Chaykin?

Staton: As far as Howard goes, I've never known Howard to miss a deadline. I certainly don't think he's known for missing deadlines. Frank is notorious for missing deadlines, but he's been amazingly **early** with everything with us.

CF: Perhaps a major point in trying to re-establish himself is to prove himself dependable.

Staton: That may be. As far as we're concerned he's been amazingly dependable. And Mike Grell is far ahead on Sable. The hardest thing is me. I'm not known for anything but keeping deadlines. I'm always finishing up E-Man at the last minute because I'm doing staff work. But, I'm managing to get E-Man out. It's always a strain to get everything out on time.

CF: Does First Comics plan on doing any other type of publishing that has been made public?

Staton: Not past American Flag, no. We're really strict on not making any announcement on anything until it's actually nailed down legally.

CF: What about format? Do you plan on doing anything in a magazine format or a Baxter format or books or graphic novels?

Staton: At this point we're not really nailed down to what we're going to do. At this point we're still just getting the first year's books out and establishing credibility getting things out on time. We're certainly talking about several different projects in different formats.

STRIP TEASE

Rick Norwood

Year in Review

In 1982 we lost some strips and gained some strips, but the gains did not make up for the losses.

The only new adventure strips of which I am aware are "Bruce Lee" and "Sargent Preston." Neither strip is of outstanding quality. Neither strip has gained much of a following. I predict that they will struggle along for three or four years and then quietly fold.

There have been a number of new humor strips, but none especially worthy of note.

On the other side of the ledger, we lost "Star Trek" (last strip Oct. 30, 1982) and "Doonesbury" (actually a 1983 casualty: last strip Jan. 2, 1983). Doonesbury is officially on a 20 month vacation, but only time will tell.

While the old established adventure strips like "Prince Valiant" and "The Phantom" are holding their own, the newer adventure strips are struggling to survive. Even the best of the new strips, "Latigo" and "Star Wars", lost papers in 1982. "Modesty Blaise" is in so few papers that the syndicate no longer bothers to list the strip in **Editor and Publisher** magazine, but the strip does still appear, still running about a year behind British syndication. "Steve Canyon" lost papers in 1982, because of accusations of too much sex and violence. If newspaper editors think Milton Caniff is too violent, I wonder what they would make of Frank Miller. And Mike Grell's excellent new look to the Sunday Tarzan strip has not gained the strip a single paper, as far as I can tell. This is an area in which letters from Grell's fans would certainly help.

It seems that adventure strips are

"IT IS NOW THE 14TH DAY SINCE MY PURSER AND I WERE CRUELLY CAST UPON THIS GODFORSAKEN PIECE OF ROCK. THE WRETCHEDNESS OF OUR LIFE HERE IS UNIMAGINABLE."
...BUT I RECKON I'D BE FINER IF I KNOWED HOW YOUR BROTHER WAS DOIN.
THAT'S NOT THE ELEPHANT'S GRAVEYARD, IT'S SHIP #2 AGAIN!
MANY ONE WOULD HAVE SAID IT'S A SIGN OF BAD LUCK!
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS PLACE!

on a long, slow, and perhaps terminal decline. There are, after all, only two reasons for adventure strips to exist: the large size display that a newspaper page affords, and an economic structure that rewards the most successful artist/writers enough to inspire them to their very best work, and give them time to do it. Now, both of these reasons have largely passed away. Newspapers do not use the large display area they have available, but cram as many strips onto a page as they possibly can. And very few strips are popular enough to pay their artist a decent wage.

We will always have the beautiful full pages of Alex Raymond's "Flash Gordon", Hal Foster's "Prince Valiant", Burne Hogarth's "Tarzan", V.T. Hamlin's "Alley Oop", and Warren Tufts's "Lance". But what have we lost in the decline of the adventure strip? Why didn't we have a full page Russ Manning strip, or a full page by Steranko or Neal Adams? Answer: because there are no full page comic strips left, anywhere in the world.

Could the adventure strip make a comeback? It could. If, for example, Richard and Wendy Pini had done **Elfquest** as a Sunday page I am sure it would have been a huge success. The talent is there. The readers are there. I hope it will come to pass.

Meanwhile, here is an guide to the top adventure strips of 1982. [Most strips are not titled, so in most cases I have invented a descriptive title. Titles in quotes appear on the strip itself.]

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
by Stan Lee and Fred Kida:

(The Sunday and daily tell the same story.)
Dr. Doom's Flying Saucer
Spidey Jeans
Muffy Ainsworth
Tana's Secret

FLASH GORDON
by Dan Barry and Bob Fujitani

Sunday:
Graveyard of Rocketships
South Pole of Mongo
Ming's Expedition to the Unexplored Continent
Outpost MX-112
daily:
Rinaldo, Knight of Mongo
Mongo Explores the Galaxy
Independence Day on Mongo

GASOLINE ALLEY
BY Dick Moores

(The Sunday and daily tell the same story.)
The Deadbeats
School of Dance
Winding the Clock
Junie
The Old Engine
M. Rose for Mayor
Adopting Rover

Gasoline Alley
Fool wind! It blow away m' wallpaper!
What's this?
All of them... identical to mine!
Mrs Bump, perhaps we should have a word!
Mrs. Bump?

LATIGO
by Stan Lynde

(Only the daily has continuity.)
Oliver Sudden's Secret Mine
The Prodigal Son
Doc's Double
The Bear
Mustang Mary Comes to Town

MODESTY BLAISE
by Peter O'Donnell
(Drawn by Neville Colvin)

(Daily only, reprints British dailies circa 1981)
"The Lady Killers" 5033-5127a
"Garvin's Travels" 5128-5229a
"The Scarlet Maiden" 5230-5329a
"The Moon Man" 5330-

PRINCE VALIANT
by John Cullen Murphy and Cullen Murphy

Val thwarts the Constantinople general Belisarius. Justinian, once Val's friend, now covets Aleta (Val's wife and Queen of the Misty Isles) and is Val's bitter enemy. Justinian murders his uncle, Justin, and proclaims himself Emperor. He orders Belisarius to lead the fleet of Constantinople against the Misty

Isles. The fleet is defeated by the same trick Archimedes used to save Syracuse, but Justinian succeeds in having Aleta's infant son kidnapped. However, a soft hearted underling, instead of killing the child, gives him to a Jewish couple from Mesopotamia. Arn, Val's oldest son, leaves on a quest to find the infant. Meanwhile Arn's brother Galan has befriended a traveling Chinese scholar, and receives permission to travel and study with him. They reach India, and have many adventures. The story then returns to Arn's quest. Justinian, discovering that Aleta's child is still alive, orders all male infants in Mesopotamia to be killed. The slaughter begins. With the help of a Rabbi, Arn locates the lost child, but Justinian's army surrounds them.

STAR TREK

[Sunday and daily tell the same story.]

10-25-81 The Omnimind - by Sarman DiVono and Ron Harris
3-1-82 The Bebebebequ - by DiVono, Harris, and Larry Niven
7-18-82 Starship Regatta - by DiVono and Harris
9-5-82 Graveyard of Lost Spaceships - by Pedraic Shigetani
Star Trek ended on 10-30-82

COLLAPSING IN ON ITSELF AT AN INCREDIBLY ACCELERATED RATE! THAT MAKES IT SO DENSE, ITS GRAVITATIONAL PULL IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERCOME!
B-BUT IF IT'S NOT OVERCOME...
WE'LL EVENTUALLY BE PULLED INTO THE STAR! LUKE AND CAPTAIN SOLO ARE TRYING TO FIND THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR LURING US HERE...

STAR WARS

BY Al Williamson and Archie Goodwin

[Sunday and daily tell the same story.]
7-27-81 The Serpent Masters
11-2-82 Deadly Reunion
1-2-82 Traitor's Gambit
3-8-82 The Night Beast
5-17-82 The Return of Ben Kenobi
7-26-82 The Power Gem
10-4-82 Iceworld
11-14-82 Admiral Ackbar

STEVE CANYON

by Milton Caniff

Lee Olson and the Angel of Death
Looby McSump
The Ransom of Horshoffer Jones
See if Anyone Salutes

TARZAN

Sunday by Mike Grell

#2605 7-19-81 White Hunter in Opar (first Mike Grell story)
#2615 9-27-81 The Mercenary
#2627 12-20-81 Snow
#2639 3-14-82 The Artist
#2651 6-6-82 Killer in Pal-ul-don
#2663 8-29-82 The Shuttle
#2675 11-21-82 Family Christmas
The daily Tarzan is currently reprinting 1957 daily strip by John Celardo and Dick Van Buren

STEVE CANYON
10
BY
MILTON CANIFF
WHO ALLOWED PHOTOGRAPHERS IN HERE? KROON, HAVE THEM THROWN OUT!
HEY, MISS CALHOON, SOME OF THOSE GUYS ARE MY FRIENDS! YOU'RE NEWS - AND THEY EARN A LIVING KEEPING UP WITH PEOPLE WHO MAKE HEADLINES!

STRIPS

WALT DISNEY'S
Treasury of Classic Tales

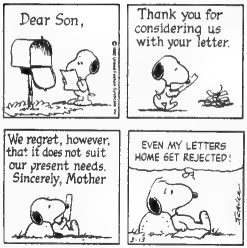
(Sunday only)

1-24-82 Tron
6-13-82 Tex
10-3-82 Mickey's Christmas Carol
1-2-83 Ferdinand the Bull and the Robbers

Comic strips and the media: 1982. There were two major news stories on the comics in 1982, one the end of "Doonesbury", the other the success of "Garfield". These two stories were reported as straight news, often headline news, in most newspapers and periodicals. The stories on "Doonesbury" hailed the Pulitzer Prize winning strip, and hoped for its speedy return. The stories on Garfield touted the strip's success in paperback reprints, most saying that this was the first time a single author had three -- then four -- then five books or the paperback best seller list. A nice tribute to Garfield, but unfortunately untrue. At one time Mickey Spillane had seven books on the paperback best seller list. But, then, facts have never been of major importance in news reporting.

Adaptations of comic strips to other media: 1982
"Annie" continued it's successful run on Broadway [and was made into a disasterous motion picture]. "Snoopy" is a new musical based on "Peanuts." the 1981-82 T.V. season saw new Peanuts specials: "A Charlie Brown Celebration" and "Someday You'll Find Her, Charlie Brown," in addition to numerous reruns of classic Peanuts specials. The 1982-'83 season will have two more Peanuts cartoons, one of which, "It's Magic, Charlie Brown", has already aired. There was also the highly successful "Here Comes Garfield." And on cable tv we had the B.C. Christmas and Thanksgiving specials.

From the adventure strips, we had a return of the Flash Gordon Saturday cartoon, which mixed segments of the old Saturday morning Flash Gordon with new adventures involving a Godzookie lookalike. In prime time, as a T.V. movie, was "Flash Gordon--the Greatest Adventure of them All". Judith Crist gave it an excellent review in TV Guide, and listed it as a runner up in her **Best TV Movies of 1982.** I enjoyed it. A great deal of the footage we had already seen [in a different order] on Saturday mornings, but the beginning and ending were new. Personally, I liked the climax from Chapter Four of the Saturday show better than the one in the movie, but the movie had much better editing, with crisper action and less repitition. Someday, I hope to sort out the details of the Flash Gordon cartoons. It goes something like this. First came a feature length animated film, written by Sam Peeples, a fine writer, who wrote both the live action and the animated Star Trek pilots. then, instead of releasing the film, they cut it up, together with several hours of new footage and much repitition, to make thirteen [?] Saturday morning episodes. Now, they have finally


Dear Son,
We regret, however, that it does not suit our present needs.
Sincerely, Mother
Thank you for considering us with your letter.
EVEN MY LETTERS HOME GET REJECTED!

GARFIELD

SURPRISE, GARFIELD! I BOUGHT YOU ANOTHER RUBBER MOUSE
YIPPEE SKIP
JIM DAVIS
BY THE WAY, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR LAST ONE?
IT WAS TRAGIC
HE WAS CAUGHT AND EATEN BY A RUBBER CAT
© 1983 United Feature Syndicate, Inc
1-27

released the film. I don't know what they are doing on Saturday morning. Have they just cut enough from each original chapter to make room for the new cartoons (which are self-contained, not a serial), or have they recast the whole thing into new, shorter installments. The whole situation is hell for a Rash Gordon compleatist like myself.

I have heard that there was a Modesty Blaise live action pilot, but I missed it.

chosen. Whoever did the color did not read the text, so that we might have, for example, a character say "Look at the red spaceship!" and the spaceship be colored green.

All of the many black and white books from Pacific are good, if you like the strips they reprint. Their best series is Warren Tufts' "Casey Ruggles" daily, but they are also regularly publishing "Rip Kirby" dailies by Alex Raymond, old "Rash Gordon" dailies by Austin Briggs, and several

reprint the entire run of this short lived strip. Some of the stories are actually written by former Marvel Comics writer Mickey Spillane, who went on to bigger (if not necessarily better) things. The reprint is very well done, though the sunday strips are in black and white.

The Okefenoke Star continues to bring us beautiful reprints of the Pogo strip, and of other Pogo material.

Amazing Heroes continues to use reprints of "Star Wars" in each

MODESTY BLAISE
by PETER O'DONNELL
drawn by NEVILLE COLMAN
THE Lady KILLERS
12-10
IN TIME PAST...
GO AND TAKE OVER AT THE BACCARAT TABLE, ANTON
AT ONCE, MAM' SELLE
THAT IS THE PRETTY LITTLE THING WE ARE TO KILL

Comic strip reprints: 1982

It was a good year for reprints of classic strips. In addition to my own complete, full size, full color reprint or the first year of "Prince Valiant", there were two new Prince Valiant books from the Pacific Comics Club. Each volume reprints a complete year; the new volumes offered reprint 1959 and 1960. These books are about half full page size, and the coloring is much less detailed than on the original strip, but both color and format are pleasing, infinitely better than in the Nostalgia Press books. Highly recommended.

The Buck Rogers series from Pacific is much less successful. It does offer the early Buck Rogers Sunday pages for the first time in color, but the color is poor: dull, flat, and ineptly

other titles. Send for their catalog.

Another major fan publisher of strip reprints is Ken Pierce. Top of his line is the Modesty Blaise series, which offers stories which Ed Aprill's **Cartoonist Showcase** and **The Menomonee Falls Gazette** both missed, from the prime period of the strip, when Jim Holdeway was drawing it. Volume Four is just out. This series is the best daily reprint series around, judged on content, quality, and price. Not to be missed.

Ken has also completed his series of "Spirit" daily strips in four volumes, and begun a series of "Axe" reprints. The girls in these British daily strips just can't seem to keep their clothes on.

Mike Hammer: The Comic Strip is the first of two volumes, which will

EBONY WHITE, YOU WANT ME TO LOAN YOU A HUNDRED DOLLARS TO BUY A DIAMOND RING TO GIVE TO SCARLETT FOR CHRISTMAS? OF ALL THINGS!
"GULP." YAS-SUH, MIST SPIRIT! BOSS
DON'T YOU REALIZE ENGAGEMENT IS A PRELUDE TO MAR-RIAGE? YOU THINK OF MARRIAGE WHEN YOU CAN'T SAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR A RING?

STRIPS

THE SEEKERS
by J. M. Burns & P. Douglas
CARDI, SEE HOW...
NOW TO FIND OUT WHY SHE'S EXTENDED HER HONEYMOON INDEFINITELY, AND IS WEEK'S OVERDUE BACK AT THAT SCIENCE LAB.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU, I GUESS. YOU SEE OUR JOB IS TO LOCATE MISSING PEOPLE— LIKE YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND
WHO SAYS WE'RE MISSING? ALAN AND I BELONG HERE NOW ON GULL ISLAND!

issue, but with the new, smaller size these reprints are much less desirable. Also, the "Star Wars" reprint is beginning to skip strips, and the editor dropped "Star Hawks" entirely.

The Comic Reader continues excellent "Capt. Kentucky" reprints, as well as reprints of old "Superman" daily strips, and occasional reprints of minor British strips, "The Seekers" and "Paul Temple".

Quite a wealth of strip reprints, and we have a new strip reprint magazine, NEMO, to look forward to in 1983.

From the mainstream publishers, bookstores and newsstands were well stocked with comic strip reprints. The only magazine of strip reprints is **The Spirit**, though 1983 will see the debut of a **Steve Canyon** magazine. **Comics Scene** magazine had quite a few articles and news stories on comic strips.

Hardback of the year was a revised version of **Milton Caniff: Rembrandt of the Comic Strip** edited by Rick Marshall. This beautiful book is more a showcase of Caniff art than a strip reprint, but it is highly recommended. It is also available in soft cover.

There were, as usual, quite a few trade paperbacks of strip reprints. Far and away the best selling of these were the Garfield books. These are done right: every strip reprinted, in order, with the date still on it. The

Steve Canyon

EL CHARRIBO, PLAY THAT BACK...
A U.S. CITIZEN, FEMALE, LEADING, AND PAYING FOR, A REVOLT OF THE LOCAL FARMHANDS ?
HAVE THE U.S. COUNSELLOR PEOPLE MADE A REPORT ON THIS ?
ONE SUPPOSES — BUT MAYBEE FEETEES NOT SO GOOD THE TIME TO TELL WASHINGTON /
AND YOU ASKED ME TO CHECK IT ALL OUT BEFORE MY COUNTRY MIGHT BE EMBARRASSED?
DON'T ANSWER THAT! — YOU MIGHT LOSE YOUR CARD IN THE LATIN SLAM-UNCLE-SAM CLUB/

forth and fifth books in the series came out in 1982, bringing the reprints up to 6/7/81. **The Garfield Treasury** reprinted the first two years of Sunday strips in color, which is welcome even though all of the strips were already in the black and white books, a fact acknowledged (!) on the back cover of the Treasury. **Here Comes Garfield** is a new book based on the T.V. series. "Garfield" is beginning to wear a little thin, but the early strips are still classics.

New Peanuts and Doonesbury trade paperbacks came out on schedule. both worth getting, but not done right: strips skipped, not in order, dates removed. The new Peanuts book, 26th in the "Peanuts Parade" series, is **You're Weird, Sir**. The new Doonesbury is **Unfortunately, She Was Wired for Sound**.

A Buck Rogers book reprinted the first year of the Gray Morrow strip, with the Sunday strips in color. Excellent Morrow art, but not recommended, because of the dumb script. why do mainstream publisher lavish excellent reproduction on mediocre strips and use poor reproduction on excellent strips?

Popeye: the First 50 Years was well produced, but contained too much Sagendorf and not enough Segar. E.C. Segar's Popeye is one of the great strips of all time. Bud Sagendorf, who currently writes and

draws Popeye, is a good enough artist, but his scripts are unremarkable.

Gordo's Cat was an attempt to cash in on the cat craze. Good, but not Gordo at his best. I wish someone would reprint the funny, incredible adventures Gordo had in the fifties and sixites, before the strip adopted a gag-a-day format.

But the best trade paperback for 1982 was **The Best of Pogo**, a fat book of reprints from **The Okefenoke Star**, edited by Selby Kelly and Bill Crouch, Jr. Along with articles, satire and commentary are reprints of many rare Pogo strips, including all of the original strips from the **New York Star**, and the first month of syndicated dailies.

There were fewer standard size paperback strip reprints than usual this year. These no longer cheap, carelessly thrown together reprints make hash of the strips they reprint. Still, I usually buy B.C., Broomhilda, Haga, Tumbleweeds, and The Wizard of Id, and notice Hi and Lois and Family Circle and a few others. In 1982 the only one I saw was **B.C.... But Therioly Folkth**. Perhaps at $1.95 these books have prices themselves out of the market...or perhaps I just did not haunt the bookracks as assiduously as in former years. It's been quite a while since one of these books made me laugh.

The standard size paperbacks which reprint the Peanuts and Doonesbury trade paperbacks are not even worth listing. It takes two books to reprint on trade softcover, with much inferior paper and reproduction, and the two books together cost more than the trade paperback did. I guess these things exist for the same reason that 60 cent comics exist: a lot of people would rather pay 60 cents for 19 pages of art than pay $1.00 for 50 pages.

Finally, we had **The World's Greatest Superheroes Present Superman**, a standard paperback reprint of the first story from the comic strip of the same name, with much chopped up black and white artwork, noteworthy only for having the lonest title of any 1982 comic strip reprint, a distinction it may keep for many years to come.

And that wraps it up for 1982. I probably missed some, and may have included some books that came out late in 1981. Still, there were at least 30 books of strip reprints, a bumper crop.

But why does no one reprint "Gasoline Alley"?

See, I'm never satisfied.

THAT'S VERY FORESIGHTED OF YOU, SIR.
WELL, WRITING ALSO ALLOWS ME TO KEEP MY SANITY. IT'S PART OF SURVIVING!
WHAT CAN I DO, SIR? I FEEL SO USELESS.
WELL, THIS IS A DESERT ISLAND. I COULD PROBABLY USE A GAL FRIDAY.
REALLY? YOU WANT ME TO BE YOUR GAL FRIDAY?
SURE
AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING FORWARD, SIR, I'M FREE THIS WHOLE WEEK.
KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON, HONEY. IT'S JUST AN EXPRESSION.

BC

I'VE GOT A NEAT LITTLE ITEM FOR YOUR LATE NEWS SIGNOFF.
B.C. NEWS
"A 90-YEAR-OLD NUN CARRIED A BOY SCOUT ACROSS A BUSY INTERSECTION TODAY"
GREAT BIT! ...HOW'D SHE DO THAT?
ON THE GRILLE OF HER STUDEBAKER.

FORGOTTEN SUPERHEROES

by Lou Mougin

THE JACK OF HEARTS

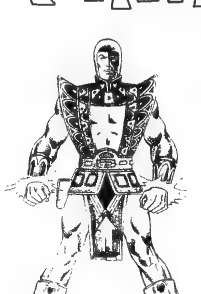
This installment must, regrettably, break the rules. The Jack of Hearts isn't really a **forgotten** hero; it's just that nobody seems to **remember** him very much.

He's been around for six years now, and only headlined one comic in all that time (**Marvel Premiere #44**). He's been with the Sons of the Tiger, Iron Fist, Shang-Chi, Iron Man, the Thing, the Hulk, the Defenders and Rom. His costume is outstanding enough, but he just doesn't seem to have what's needed to get him over the hump and into his own series.

So why is the Jack of Hearts still in the chips after all this time?

Well, maybe the fact that Bill Mantlo created him has something to do with that. Mantlo is virtually the **only** Second Generation scripter still working at Marvel, and currently writes headliners such as **The Hulk**, **Rom** and **The Micronauts**. As long as Mantlo's around, it's a safe bet the Jack can still get in the game.

Enough of the obvious metaphor. It begins back in **Deadly Hands of Kung Fu #22**, with a Sons of the Tiger strip entitled "Who Is The White Tiger?" Mantlo and artists Keith Giffen (late of the **Legion**) and Rico Rival were beefing up this back-feature of three (or four) martial artists with a Puerto Rican super-hero, cop-show dynamics, and, near the end of the story, a shadowed foe who flipped a jack-of-hearts card at the White Tiger and then blasted him with an explosive SHHSSTRRAMM! The adversary was a gaudily-costumed, one-eyed youth decked out like his namesake from the playing card, who had time to trade a few punches with the Tiger before the "Next Issue" blurb signalled a time-out. It was obvious that the Jack focussed explosive blasts from his pointed fists, and equally obvious that the White Tiger had the edge on him – just barely – in speed and combat technique. The Jack of Hearts accused his opponent of murder most foul. "Ustedes muy **loco**, senor!" replied the Tiger. "I have killed **no one!**"



The new "hero" disagreed, and the twosome fought it out over ghetto rooftops before the Jack hit the Tiger with a triple-burst. El Tigre Blanco downed, it was time for Jack to deliver his origin soliloquy. The Jack of Hearts...named, aptly enough, Jack Hart...was shown at his father's side while the latter, a scientific genius, refused to give up his latest invention to a pair of ruthless industrialists. "For it was my genius that developed the zero fluid! A totally clean, immensely powerful form of liquid fuel! So powerful, in fact – that there will be no **need** of any other form of energy -- fossil, nuclear, or solar – to fulfill man's needs!" The ruthless capitalist rings in a pair of gunnies to persuade him of the error of his ways.

As the hoods ventilate his father, Jack Hart dives for the basement wherein reposes his father's tank of Zero Fluid. The thugs shatter the tank and splash the liquid all over the hapless Jack, who finds that he has become charged with explosive energy, even though he has lost his left eye. Jack lurches into a crouch and unleashes a choice bolt of hellfire. ZAP! -- and the evildoers become piles of ash. This was a non-Code book, and there wasn't any nonsense about leaving them for the police! Passing by his father's body, Hart notices a playing card clutched in his hand...why, it just happened to be the Jack of Hearts!

Thus, outfitted in multicolored Oriental armor to contain his power, Jack Hart had become the incendiary Jack of Hearts. How this all tied in

AND OF HOW HE USED THAT POWER TO WREAK VENGEANCE UPON THE CORPORATION, HE MADE SOME MISTAKES ALONG THE WAY. LIKE FIGHTING THE WHITE TIGER--
© 1983 Marvel Comics

with the White Tiger wasn't clear, but the kung fu paladin turned the tide by kicking, punching and throwing the both of them over the roof's edge. Both of them landed on a parked car below, the Jack taking the impact -- voluntarily. He spent the next two installments (**DHKF #24** and**26**) in a hospital bed, recuperating as martial arts hoodlums tried to abduct him and the Tiger and two cops battled on his behalf. The Jack revealed, "The men who killed my dad said they were sent by the Tiger!" This led to a multi-issue quest culminating in **DHKF #31**, as Jack, the Tiger, Iron Fist and Shang-Chi followed the trail of "The Tiger" to a freighter full of bad guys. Fu Manchu himself proved to be the power behind all the intrigues, but the Tiger's brother was his main catspaw and paid with his life. Before this, the Jack of Hearts kept busy blowing another super-villain to bits. He did a walk-off in the final "Sons" strip (**DHKF #32**) and stepped into the world of four-color Marvels in the months to come.

In **Incredible Hulk #214**, his next appearance, Len Wein demonstrated that "The Jack of Hearts Is Wild!" Apparently not wild enough, however. The Green Goliath took out the erstwhile hero without even working up a lime-colored sweat. At least Jack had a chance to display his uniform's colors in all their blue-red-yellow-orange-and-grey fury! Mantlo was scripting **Iron Man** at the time, so only a month passed before Jack Hart cameoed in **IM #102** and then joined the cast of the "Midas War" in issues #103-107. After aiding Iron Man and company against the gold-fingered villain, Jack of Hearts begged leave to stay on and be taught super-heroism from the master. The Golden Avenger agreed and Jack and Madame Masque formed part of Iron Man's travelling roadshow for most of Mantlo's tenure on the strip. Most of this was the tale of a massive spacewar on the Moon; when Jack came back to Earth, he decided it was time to go it alone again.

Marvel Premiere #44, scripted -- again -- by Mantlo and drawn by Keith Giffen, featured the Jack in his only starring role, revealed that his life-span was drastically curtailed by the poisonous effects of the Zero Fluid, and pitted him against a costumed spy named Hemlock in a finely-done one-part saga. After that, our hero joined forces with The Thing and the Yancy Street Gang to take on Machinesmith (**Marvel Two-In-One #48**), joined in a three-part farce of an over-crowded Defenders saga (**Defenders #62-64**), and ended up fighting Rom, and keeping up his record of battling good guys

I AGREE WITH THOR COMPLETELY! THAT WAS SUPER!
AN AVENGER... ME? BUT I'VE HAD MY POWERS ONLY A FEW WEEKS!
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR MERRY BAND?
WELL, WHO COULD BETTER HELP YOU LEARN TO USE YOUR POWERS THAN WE...COULD? YOUR STATUS WOULD BE AS AN AVENGER-IN-TRAINING!
WHAT?! JAN, WAIT A MINUTE! OUR GOVERNMENT CLEARANCES--!
AGENT GYRICH-- WILL--!
BUT HOW--?
OH, HE CAN'T SAY A THING! I ALREADY HAVE APPROVAL FROM THE PRESIDENT TO INSTITUTE A LIMITED-SECURITY TRAINING PROGRAM!
I KNOW THE FIRST LADY. WE HAVE THE SAME MASSEUR!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. I'M HONORED, BUT...
SAY YES, KIDDO! I'M ALL FOR IT!
EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER, AND I MUST ADMIT IT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA.
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS.
ALL RIGHT, JAN. YOU HAVE MY VOTE.
GOOD! THOR!
AYE, JANET. THERE IS WISDOM IN YOUR PLAN.
THAT'S TWO-THIRDS OF THE MEMBERSHIP FOR THE PLAN! YOU'RE IN, CAPTAIN ...IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.
I THINK... YES!
GREAT! OH, JARVIS, WOULD YOU SHOW CAPTAIN MARVEL AROUND THE MANSION?
IT WOULD BE A PLEASURE, MS. VAN DYNE!
© 1983 Marvel Comics

anamares, in **Rom #12**.

So what do we make of the Jack of Hearts?

Well, to reiterate what we said before, he's obviously around because Bill Mantlo created him, and Bill Mantlo likes him. But why hasn't he made it big? One might ask what there is about him to make **him** big. The Jack is just another run-of-the-mill super-hero, without much to distinguish him from the rest of the breed. As such, there's no reason to stop buying, say, **Iron Man** and concentrate on **Jack of Hearts** instead.

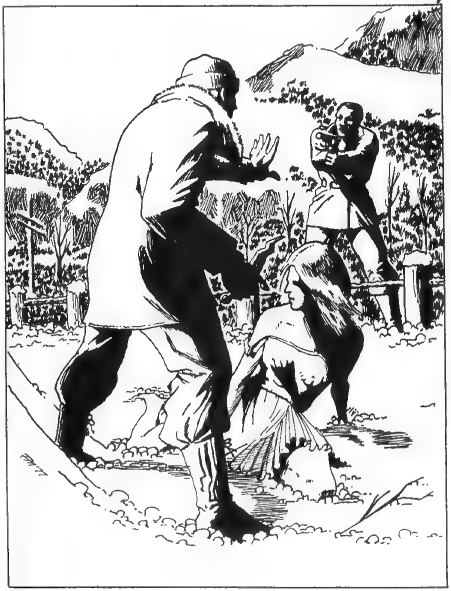
His costume is extremely tough to draw with all the minute designing on it. His power of directing bolts of explosive force isn't much different from all the other thud-and-blunderers around today. And in almost all of his appearances he's been shown as too dad-burned **dumb** to tell good guy from bad guy! As a gimmick, this might work once or twice, but four or five times is too much, gang. Any more of it and SHIELD will ask him to turn in his super-hero license. In short, Jack of Hearts is too plain **weak** to make it as a super-soloist... but as a member of a team, such as the Avengers or Defenders, he might just find his niche.

Or Mantlo could take the easy way out and have him succumb to his cancerous ailment, or be miraculously cured and give up super-heroics.

Whatever course is chosen, one thing is certain: we'll see the Jack of Hearts in action again. After all, Mantlo is still his papa, and no character at Marvel is truly..a Forgotten Hero.

End Notes

FRANK MILLER
THE FRIEND I HARDLY KNOW



Frank Miller is one of the hottest professionals working in comic books today. While many second and third generation artists were content boffing out their tired derivations of Adams and Kirby, Lanky Frank strode purposefully in from Montpelier, Vermont. He labored in obscurity and flirted with starvation in the wilds of Manhattan while getting his feet wet with occasional short story assignments from Western and DC.

Jim Shooter saw promise and vast potential in Frank's early efforts and assigned the young artist to a second rate title, the long-running and stagnant **Daredevil.** When Miller took over the writing chores from his collaborator, Roger McKenzie, heads really started to turn in fandom as well as within the industry.

Daredevil was no longer just another rubber stamp Marvel comic. It didn't even go back to nostalgic roots to regain its popularity, as **Fantastic Four** and **Amazing Spider-Man** have done. It was "merely" an extraordinary vehicle to see Frank Miller DOING HIS STUFF!

The thing that amazes most people is the meteoric rise of this man. He seemed to come literally out of nowhere, and develop quickly, and effectively, as an artist, then writer/artist to his present status as one of the most watched and lauded giants in the profession. And the guy is still under thirty years of age!

But then you already knew that.

THE MYTHICAL APA-5 PHOTO PAGES

FEATURING PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS OF APA-5 (& some weirdoes from who knows where)

Mark Verheiden

Sam Kujava

Kurt Erichsen

Dale Nelson

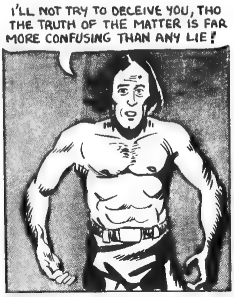
Chris Warner

BoB Pinaha

Frank Miller

Bob Napier

Rod Fraser



Before **Ronin**, Frank's eagerly awaited 1983 blockbuster from DC...before **Daredevil** and the success at Marvel...before sporadic work for DC and Western and toughing it out in the big bad metropolis...there was one of a number of Amateur Press Alliances [APAs, for short] called APA-5, made up of a number of people, including me and Frank Miller.

A look back at my collection of thousands of pages of dozens of issues of APA-5 reveals that the rise was **not** meteoric. And Miller didn't suddenly burst upon the scene from nowhere, but worked solidly and productively throughout his teen years, with a large body of work providing a solid base for his eventualy jump into the big time.

But first we must go back, back...

I joined the ranks of APA-5 in late 1972. Out of high school, attending trade school and college part-time, working for my folks almost every other spare minute, I saw my entry into APA-5 as the ticket that would take me from casual comic collector to full-fledged fan! Frank Miller had joined this far-flung group of twenty-odd people just three months earlier. I noted him quickly, for, as one who sees parallels in many things, I saw that Frank and I were among the few members that were interested in doing our own comics in these pages. A guy like Ron Harris [who would go on to draw the Dallas and Star Trek strips] was somewhat older than us and infinitely more polished. Other young artists were good but I felt this parallel between myself and Frank, and it was a strong one. Our ages differed by about four years but since I was a late bloomer in many ways, and Frank was a blooming **wunderkind**, we were about evenly matched. Our primary interest was graphic storytelling, as opposed to portfolio art and merely drawing pretty pictures. That made him aces in my book.

Whereas the normal member contributed a minimal number of pages on a sporatic schedule, Frank and I were the only strip artists that contributed regular installments of our comics. What was the good of a continuing saga if you had to wait months between chapters? For a couple of amateurs who were doing this mostly for their own education and a very small, sometimes indifferent audience, this regularity was an early sign of professionalism.

Besides his dependability, prolific nature, and yen for cartooning, I grew to like him as a person. His personal zines, filled with more illos, mailing comments on other members' work, fiction and non-fiction, opinions on comics, politics and you-name-it were always interesting reads. For a high school kid, Frank was remarkable well read, and already possessed of some very strong opinions about particular philosophies. While most kids are interested in only girls and cars, Miller was thinking about his lifestyle and where he wanted to go.

You can call it **Objectivism**, rugged individualism, or any of a dozen other lesser labels. Frank Miller was his own person, or at least, working at it. His strong, sincere opinions rang loud and clear to me, a thousand miles

away. Most of the people in my everyday life were followers. They fit into convenient molds. I didn't have to **agree** with everything Frank said to admire him as a human being. It was even easier to like him since we were both working at the same pleasurable task — improving our abilities at writing and drawing comic books. A healthy competition was in evidence, at least from my end. Perhaps Miller didn't "need" my work to inspire him. We had our own styles and strengths. I, however, enjoyed picking up the latest Miller apazine and seeing how I could top this talented so-and so. I damned him and praised him in the same breath. If ever a living challenge existed to prod and excite me, it was the continually growing skill of Frank Miller, present in APA-5 strips such as **The Villain**, and **Call It Karma**.

The actual drawing was crude, but not for the usual reasons. Frank didn't have any 'favorite' comic books in front of him as he produced his pages. He was learning to draw from scratch, making his own mistakes and learning and growing from them, instead of relying on easy swipes to cover up his anatomical defects. No drawing wasn't his strongpoint.

He was a storyteller. From his earliest tries, I could see it. Pacing of story, economy of dialog, strong but subtle characters with distinctive traits, attention to page composition and panel design, careful spotting of blacks to convey atmosphere – all the things he's done excellently in the pages of **Daredevil**. He planned his strategy, laid out his ideas, made his boo boos, and examined the finished product...all in the pages of APA-5, for a good five years.

It was time to move on.

By late 1976 I was married, had one baby son, and had scrambled around town from one to another unsatisfying job. Like many creative fans I entertained ideas of working in the comic book industry. They made for pleasant daydreams.

When I saw the ad in **The Comic Reader** for the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, my moment had arrived. I would either give it a try and see if I had what it takes to make it as a freelancer in the big time...or I would spend the rest of my life in Green Bay, Wisconsin, regretting my timidity and making myself miserable with tales of what-might-have-been.

I went. Too poor to take my family, I left them safe and secure with dozens of relatives, while I made a solo trek to Dover, New Jersey, home of Joe Kubert and his fledgling school.

The parallels continue. Frank Miller was contributing less and less to APA-5. I had almost dropped out, but somehow continued to hang in, despite the crushing press of assignments at school and the ever-present lack of money. One day the latest issue of the apa arrived at school for me. Frank Miller had dropped out, mysteriously. I had heard that he was going to leave Vermont and make a try for comics in the center of activity, New York City. I was forty miles outside the metropolis.

Where was Frank Miller?

It was late that night as I made my way from school to my apartment. As usual, I had worked several hours on homework that never seemed to let up. It was almost impossible to avoid eye strain. Fellow student/roommate/friend Den Feduniewicz (now working for Special Projects at Marvel) and I were debating whether we'd make usual midnight trek to the Traveler's Inn, an all-night eatery a couple of miles up the road. Ken and I were fellow insomniacs, and we usually kept each other company while munching on burgers and fries and sharing opinions on where Joe's school was going.

As Ken and I crossed the school driveway, a tall, lean figure stepped from the darkness into the light of a streetlamp. Frank Miller and I met face to face.

He instinctively knew that I was **the** Sam Kujava of apa days. Immediately wondering what was wrong – why he would be **here now** – I was amazed and somewhat flattered that Frank had taken the bus all the way from New York just to meet me. Since the hour was late, Frank hoped that I'd be able to let him crash at my apartment. I was already in hot water with Kubert over letting three other apa members stay overnight without permission. But I couldn't let this moment go to waste. Send Miller back on the return bus? NO WAY! Kenny, Frank and a weary host made the familiar route to the Traveler's Inn in record time.

Frank filled me in on his activities since we had lost track of each other. He had taken a dull job driving a bus in order to save up enough money to move down from Monpelier to NYC and stay there long enough to hopefully get his foot in the comics door. He didn't say it, but I sensed that his 'nestegg' had about run out. As we talked, I wondered if he was too proud to take a loan, but kept my intentions to myself when I realised that I wasn't exactly rolling in dough myself. Nevertheless, I listened sympathetically as he spoke of his dingy flat in Manhattan, his frequent trips to Continuity Associations for helpful critiques of his current work by Neal Adams, and his first hopeful step us with a short assignment from an editor at Western.

Would Ken and I like to see samples of the strip he was working on&. We were game for anything at that late hour! Frank pulled out the large, pen-

oilled original art pages from his portfolio and we studied them. I was tired, my eyes were sore...but there was no mistaking the quality of his work. He had improved drawing greatly since the last apa stuff I had seen. A phenomenal jump in ability. My heart sank a bit. I was too exhausted to be jealous. But...all the hundreds of hours and pages that made up my life at Kubert's School seemed to crash down on me. This kid, this upstart, had done it again. As hard as I worked, I was second best to Frank Miller. **He** didn't feel that wasy, and he certainly didn't come forty miles just to needle me...but on that gloomy night in Dover, one artist's ego... sighed a little bit.

At the same time, I was overjoyed to meet Frank in person at last. He was every bit as nice a guy as I had imagined. I shared his hard luck stories as well as the satisfaction of seeing his art improve so dramatically. The inevitable moment arrived. Ken and I had to hit the sack if we were to make the 8:30 class in a few short hours. Frank had to get back to the Big Apple.

I may not have been a moneybag, but I insisted on paying for Frank's eats. I like to think that he was grateful. Down deep I think that he was lonely in the city, and that he wanted to see and hear someone he could unload on. Old apa comrade Sam Kujava fit the bill. I hope I was worth the trip.

When the three of us stepped outside the restaurant and Frank headed toward the bus depot, neither Frank nor myself could guess just how far, and fast, Frank was going. I do know that at that moment our parallel paths came to an end. They diverged quite dramatically. My first year of "Kubie U" would be my last. Miller's star, especially after Marvel snatched him up, continued to rise.

I went back to Green Bay as started a business as a freelance artist. I had had my shot. I was happy to be back with my family, and best of all, I was busy as soon as I returned. My work met with much acceptance, and good word-of-mouth advertising kept me busy.

Miller took over as artist of **Daredevil** with #158. I told a few of my fan friends that this guy was the coming thing. Get your copies now! Get in on the ground floor! No one listened. The fine line of John Byrne and Terry Austin on **X-Men** was all the rage then. This new guy was too crude, they told me. I said nothing and continued to follow the book.

I was inordinately proud of Frank's work on **Daredevil** from day one. He had leaped forward again since we had looked at his pencils that night in New Jersey. Pride was mine because I had known him and his work when it wasn't nearly as good. Miller had come a long way, he had made good, he had 'graduated' from our old alma mater, APA-5. It did me good to share some of the good feelings that came out of his success. I figured there was enough to go around.

That summer, I was attending the Chicago convention with Dwight Decker. Another member of our apa years before, he was as anxious as I

to see Frank in person. As we entered the artist's room we noticed a horde of sweaty, loud fans surrounding John Byrne's table. Another howling pack had converged on Mike Grell. I knew Mike and would hopefully get a chance to say 'hi' later. All by himself, pages spread out on his lonely table, stood Frank Miller.

Yes, unbelieving readers, that was a singular moment in history! For the first and last time, Frank Miller had plenty of elbow room at a convention and no followers to crowd him! Dwight and I took glorious advantage of this situation and we had an extremely pleasant conversation. We were quite smug. After all, we **know** how good this guy was. Yet the fans kept to their usual stomping grounds. We had Miller all to ourselves. Might as well enjoy our canny sensibilities. Luck like this didn't happen twice.

It has been a couple of years. Miller has been at almost every convention there is, except for a return visit to Chicago. That's the closest I get to rubbing elbows with pros, as time and money won't allow jet hops to New York or San Diego.

I may never get a chance to shake his hand again and exchange a few words. I hope to. One thing I'm sure of...Frank will be just as friendly and open as he was on the last two occasions. That may not count for much, but then again, I've 'known' the guy through his crude beginnings in APA-5. I've been fortunate enough to offer a kind word or two, just before he achieved the fame he deserved. Time and distance aside, I count Frank Miller as a friend.

There's a good chance that Frank thinks of me as a friend too. That WAS a good meal at the Traveler's Inn, one long, dark night ago.

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Opening Notes

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Thompson's statement that "We're always pleased to print corrections if anybody sends corrections to us," is likewise no excuse for inaccurate reporting.

I am not saying that all members of the fan press are guilty of sloppy reporting. I believe that most of them are dedicated people who are willing and eager to accept the responsibilities of journalism. They strive to report objectively and thoroughly to assess all facts with equal importance and fairness and to maintain the dignity of the press. These people are the backbone of the fan press, they take their job seriously and perform it in a professional manner. It is indeed a shame to see their efforts jeopardized for the sake of a few egos.

As for the other charges about Marvel's dealings, sentiments and behavior towards the fan press, I haven't encountered anything which even closely resembles Mr. Groths allusions. Everyone at Marvel that I have come in contact with, from Jim Shooter to Peter David, have gone out of their way to be both helpful and informative. At no time have I, or anyone else from this magazine, felt that we were veiwed as "pests". But then, we've never acted likes pests either. And, for the record, it was Tom DeFalco who informed us that the reverse Spider-Man issue was a hoax. Had we asked him sooner, the story would never have been reported. We goofed.

For more than a year now I have followed Gary Groth's lofty assessments of the comic publishing industry. I have noted his lack of satisfaction with it and concede that he has the right to be dissatisfied if that is his desire. Also noted is that he is "...a reader and follower of Marvel's comics for nearly 20 years.." and this evidently is the basis for his self inclusion in the legion of comic book experts. Well, I read a lot about Napoleon, but that in itself doesn't make me Field Marshal Nay. All that the above stated quantity of reading implies is that undoubtedly you can hold your own in a trivia match.

In summary: Groth, in his editorial, accuses Tom DeFalco of being inarticulate and abrassive. But, he fails to show that this is anything but stilted opinion, and in doing so, becomes abrasive himself. This is not surprising when you consider that Groth has discribed fans as: "snot-nosed kids, drooling adults, social maladroits," and "cases of arrested development" and has often been equally charitable to other sectors of society. All the while professing that the endless quest of his magazine is "...to elevate and inform the masses...". I guess that before you can elevate the masses, you must put them in their place. Of course, they may not agree with you on that, but you've convinced yourself that they are a brainless lot– and you don't mind informing them of it either– so what do they know? If as Groth alludes, DeFalco is "a less-than-perfect spokesman..." for Marvel, Groth's past performances have demonstrated that he is a less–than–perfect spokesman for the fan press. At least someone appointed DeFalco.

The opinions expressed in this piece do not necessarily reflect the opinions of this magazine or its publisher.

THE POSITIVE APPROACH

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